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King inspects 5th Mechanised Division

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday made an inspection visit to a number of units of the Fifth Royal Mechanised Division and was briefed on their training programmes, duties and tasks. Accompanying the King were His Royal Highness Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, director of the National Security Council and Chariman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Merei Kaabneh.

Kaddoumi sees Israeli policies leading to war

CAIRO (R) — Senior Palestinian official Farouk Kaddoumi said in remarks made available Tuesday Israel was unwilling to make peace with the Palestinians and that the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu would lead to war in the Middle East. "Netanyahu's practices are going to lead to a new war in the region and to more tension." Mr. Kaddoumi, the head of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) political (foreign affairs) department, said in remarks made available to reporters in Cairo. "Israel does not want to make peace ... All it wants is to give the Palestinians control over some aspects but it totally rejects withdrawing out of occupied Arab lands," he added.

Deputies collect signatures to petition Parliament into extraordinary session

AMMAN (J.T.) — Twenty opposition deputies on Wednesday signed a petition addressed to Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour calling for an extraordinary parliamentary session in order to discuss the new amendments to the Press and Publications Law and two other temporary laws enacted recently by the government.

The opposition deputies, holding a meeting at Parliament, also denounced the mistreatment of journalists and deputies who were staging a protest in front of the Prime Ministry Tuesday.

Several journalists sustained minor injuries after being beaten up by police attempting to disperse the protesters. Several journalists were also detained and released later in the evening.

The opposition deputies, in a statement issued after the meeting, called for setting up a committee to determine those responsible for these incidents.

Voicing support for the protesters, the deputies said journalists were only trying to express their rejection of amendments to the Press and Publications Law and to defend public freedoms, democracy, the freedom of speech and the livelihood of journalists whose newspapers are threatened with closure as well as heavy fines stipulated in the new temporary law.

"Some journalists were assaulted, including those representing Arab and foreign newspapers and (media) stations, which caused a lot of damage to Jordan's image abroad and to its human rights record," said the statement.

"Thus we hold officials in charge in the government and the security forces responsible for what happened and call for the setting up of an investigation panel to determine who is responsible," it added.

In their petition to Mr. Srour, which will be delivered once the number of deputies signing it rises to 41, called for an emergency session to also discuss the amended securities and electoral laws.

According to the second paragraph of Article 82 of the Constitution, His Majesty the King is to convene Parliament for an extraordinary session once the absolute majority of the deputies (41 members) call for the session through a signed petition which must list the issues to be discussed.

A team representing opposition parties said after meeting Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali that the premier pledged to study the possibility of calling the Parliament for an extraordinary session.

Minister of Information Samir Mutawi, meanwhile, ruled out the possibility of convening an extraordinary parliamentary session, fearing that deputies would use the session for electoral purposes. Parliamentary elections are to be held in November this year.

Crown Prince, British foreign secretary discuss Mideast crisis

Prince Hassan stresses 'soft security' concept as solution to Mideast crisis

LONDON (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Wednesday discussed with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook obstacles impeding the progress of the Middle East peace process, bilateral relations, the European Union (EU) role in the Middle East peace process and means of developing regional cooperation as well as the concept of "soft security."

The Crown Prince and Mr. Cook expressed concern over the impasse that the peace process has entered. They voiced their commitment to work towards pushing the peace march forward and to support an EU role complementary to that of the U.S.

The Crown Prince stressed in his meeting with Mr. Cook the importance of a broader humanitarian approach to security issues and the need for "soft security" or security which takes into account the humanitarian aspect of economics and politics, as the key for the solution to the Middle East crisis.

"We have had a very fruitful exchange of views together. I am very grateful for this visit. It has given me an opportunity to discuss with the Crown Prince our warm relationship with the Kingdom of Jordan and the relations between Jordan and the European countries. Britain has long historic ties with Jordan. I have given assurances that the new Labour government is anxious to make sure that those ties continue. I also repeated our strong commitment to the peace process," said Mr. Cook.

Israel arrests Palestinians

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli security forces arrested a number of Palestinians from a village near the West Bank city of Hebron accused of belonging to Hamas and planning attacks against Israel, Israel radio reported. The radio did not specify the number of Palestinians in custody but said the arrests were carried out a few days ago and the group were being detained and questioned by Israeli security. Hamas has claimed responsibility for the deaths of scores of Israelis killed in terror attacks since Israel and the PLO began negotiating peace in 1993. Last month Israel uncovered another Hamas cell, also near Hebron, involved in the March bombing of a Tel Aviv cafe that killed three Israelis and the kidnapping and killing of an Israeli soldier.

Arafat in Egypt to meet Mubarak over peace process

CAIRO (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat arrived Wednesday to discuss with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak the state of the crumbling peace process with Israel. Mr. Arafat made no statement to reporters upon arrival and immediately headed to the presidential palace in the northern suburbs of Cairo to meet Mr. Mubarak. His visit "comes after the failure of American efforts to reach a solution to the crisis and Israel's continuation of actions which froze the peace process," top Arafat adviser Nabil Abu Rudeina said in Gaza. Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have been on hold since Israel began construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem in mid-March. U.S. envoy Dennis Ross ended last week his third attempt since the beginning of the crisis to revive negotiations but failed to bring the two sides back into talks.

Israeli soldier wounded in bomb attack in South Lebanon

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (AP) — Lebanese guerrillas detonated a roadside bomb near an Israeli patrol Wednesday in southern Lebanon, wounding a soldier, security officials said. The remote-controlled bomb blew up as an infantry unit patrolled a road near the crusader-built Beaufort Castle, where Israel maintains a major base, the Lebanese officials said. The area is about six kilometres northwest of Marjayoun, the main town in the Israeli-occupied border strip. The soldier was airlifted by military helicopter to Israel, the officials added. A Hizbollah official in Sidon, provincial capital of southern Lebanon, said the explosion caused "several casualties" among the 12-man patrol. Also Wednesday, Red Cross workers and U.N. peacekeepers entered no man's land to retrieve the body of a Hizbollah guerrilla killed in a clash with Israeli troops May 6. Israeli forces agreed to hold their fire while the 15-member unit searched for the body.

Poll shows hardliner Nateq-Nouri set to win Iranian presidency; today Iranians think, tomorrow they vote

TEHRAN (R) — Iranian authorities Tuesday said 280 people had been arrested in the capital for electoral offences, and warned against further violations in the Islamic Republic's presidential campaign.

As they did so, a rare public opinion poll showed Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri holding a big lead in the run-up to Friday's polls, wide enough to ensure him overall victory on the first round.

In only the second poll of the 12-day election campaign, the newspaper Akhbar said 54.63 per cent of respondents said they would vote for Mr. Nouri and 37.42 per cent for his main opponent Mohammad Khatami.

Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri got 4.70 per cent and Reza Zaverei 1.29 per cent. The other 1.96 per cent were undecided.

Akhbar quoted pollster Jamshid Majidi as saying Mr. Nouri's lead was considerable and it would be difficult to narrow the gap.

Tehran police chief Brigadier-General Youssef Reza Abolfathi told local media some 280 people had been detained up to Sunday for electorial violations. He did not specify them, but campaign posters plastered on city walls have been defaced and rumours have been spread about what life would be like under this or that candidate.

One rumour, for example, said women would be forced to wear the chador, an all-enveloping black veil, rather than a headscarf and a long coat over trousers, if the conservative Nouri were elected.

The powerful Guardian Council, which selected the four presidential candidates from a field of 238 based on their loyalty to the Islamist government, said any violations of election rules must be countered indiscriminately.

"You are responsible for healthy elections," Ayatollah Ahmad Janati, secretary of the 12-man body of clerics and lawyers, told bodies set up by the council to oversee Friday's poll to succeed President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Mr. Nouri warned against election publicity turning into a smear campaign, suggesting that centrists close to Mr. Rafsanjani and Islamist left-wingers who support Mr. Khatami were behind it.

Some Khatami supporters express concerns over conservative officials using their influence to ensure Mr. Nouri's victory.

Mr. Rafsanjani, who has not publicly backed Mr. Khatami, warned officials Friday about abuse of power to help any candidate and said vote-rigging would be an unforgivable treason.

Iranian women, wearing the black chador over their heads, pass by posters of presidential candidate, Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, in Tehran, Wednesday. Iranians will go to the polls on Friday to elect their president (AFP photo)

Mr. Khatami, like Mr. Nouri a Shiite cleric, has often come under attack during the campaign for being soft on Islamic values because of his reputation as a tolerant politician.

Forced to resign because of his relatively liberal views in 1992 after serving 10 years as culture minister, Mr. Khatami has gained wide support among women, young people and intellectuals who fear stricter Islamist rules regulating everyday life and freedom of expression if Mr. Nouri wins.

Mr. Nouri is backed by key clerical groups and is close to the Bazaaris — Iran's traditional merchant class of traders. His campaign has been boosted by remarks by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who stopped short of openly backing him but urged clergymen to actively help voters make up their minds.

Some 33 million Iranians are eligible to vote. Campaigning is due to end Wednesday night, allowing one day for reflection before voting.

An absolute majority of more than 50 per cent of the vote is required for election. If no candidate wins sufficient votes Friday there will be a run-off between the top two.

(See story on page 12 for international policy analysis).

4 tortured and killed in Algeria

ALGIERS (AP) — A 7-year-old girl, a 70-year-old man and two members of their family were tortured and killed on a farm just south of Algiers by assailants who then burned their bodies, a newspaper said Monday.

The charred bodies of the victims — killed by sharp-edged weapons — were found among the burnt remains of their farm, outside the village of Sidi-Musa, 25 kilometres south of the capital, the Daily Liberte reported.

The report identified the victims only as the girl, the man and a couple related to them.

The government did not immediately confirm the killings, and there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

But suspicion fell on Islamist militants, whose five-year insurgency has left more than 60,000 people dead.

The insurgency — aimed at toppling the military-backed government and installing a state based on Islamic law — began after the army cancelled 1992 legislative elections that Islamist parties were poised to win.

Islamist militants have massacred hundreds of people living in the rural area around Sidi-Musa since the beginning of the year.

Palestinian detainee dies in Israeli hospital

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli policemen are under investigation after a Palestinian detainee died in mysterious circumstances after attacking a guard while in hospital, a police spokesman said on Wednesday.

Khaled Abu Diya, 37, had been transferred to a mental hospital three days ago after trying to commit suicide in his cell in Jerusalem's Moscobiya prison, Jerusalem police spokesman Shmuel Ben Rubi told AFP.

Late Tuesday night he complained of medical problems and was taken to Shaare Tsadek Hospital in Jerusalem. There he broke out of his handcuffs and hit a policeman on the head before police and hospital security succeeded in subduing and recuffing him, Mr. Ben Rubi said.

Abu Diya was then put in a hospital room where he was found dead three hours later, he said.

Mr. Ben Rubi said a commission was investigating the exact cause of death and the conduct of the police. Abu Diya was arrested two weeks ago for trying to steal a weapon from an Israeli soldier outside Al Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem.

Arafat condones execution of Palestinian land sellers; Israel to file protest at U.N.

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat staunchly defended the execution of Palestinians who sell land to Jews in an interview published Wednesday, calling land-sellers "traitors."

Mr. Arafat, in an interview with the Israeli daily Yediot Aharanot, also warned that settlement policies of Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu had "destroyed" the peace process and brought the entire region to the brink of violence.

"We are talking about a few traitors and we will apply what has been determined by law against them," Mr. Arafat said concerning Palestinians involved in the sale of land in the West Bank and east Jerusalem to Israelis.

"Israelis reacted with outrage after two Palestinians accused of selling land to Jews were found murdered in the West Bank city of Ramallah this month after the Palestinian justice minister called for the death penalty for such sales.

Mr. Netanyahu called the policy "racist" and the U.S. State Department called on Mr. Arafat to come out against the killings. But Mr. Arafat defended the harsh punishment.

"The incidents must be understood in their context. Since its creation, Israel has been stripping Arabs of their property. The land always goes from Arab hands to Jewish lands," Mr. Arafat said.

"Can a Palestinian resident of Nablus or Hebron buy land in Israel? What should we call those from our nation who serve Israel's stripping policy?" he said.

Israel announced Wednesday that it will file a protest with the U.N. Human Rights Commission over the death threats.

"The Palestinian (National) Authority decision is racist and reeks of anti-Semitism," said a statement issued by Danny Naveh, the secretary of Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet.

"If the Palestinian (National) Authority hopes to gain the confidence of Jewish people around the world, it must cancel this shameful decisions," he said.

The Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Commission was given authority two years ago to handle cases of anti-Semitism around the world. Mr. Naveh heads a special government panel on anti-Semitism.

Mr. Arafat said Jordanian law which is officially still in effect in the West Bank since Israel occupied the area from Jordan in 1967, lay down the death penalty for land sales to Israelis.

Concerning frozen negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, Mr. Arafat warned that Mr. Netanyahu "has destroyed the peace process between Israel and the Arabs and now the entire region is on the edge of severe riots."

"Netanyahu is responsible for what happens. He pays no heed to the entire world. Israel has never been as isolated as it is now," he said.

Israel's Chief-of-Staff General Amnon Shahak echoed Mr. Arafat's warning on Tuesday, when he told Israel's parliamentary foreign affairs and defence committee that "the current situation cannot go on for long."

The deadlock "will inevitably lead to an eruption of violence if dialogue with the Palestinians is not reestablished," he said.

Iraq, Syria meet on food needs

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh has briefed Syrian businessmen on his country's food needs under Iraq's oil-for-food deal with the United Nations, the head of a visiting Syrian group of traders said Tuesday.

"The minister reviewed Iraq's food needs in general," said Rateb Al Shallah, chairman of Syria's chamber of commerce and industry, who arrived in Baghdad Monday accompanied by six leading Syrian businessmen. Mr. Shallah said he would not sign trade deals with Iraq at this stage. The official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said Mr. Saleh discussed with the Syrians "the possibility of importing food and medicine from Syria which is allowed by the U.N. Security Council resolutions."

Israeli soldier injured in southern Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — An Israeli soldier was wounded Wednesday when Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas exploded a bomb in the Israeli "security zone" in southern Lebanon, security sources said.

The device exploded as an Israeli foot patrol passed by on the road to Kfar Tebnit, one of the crossing points between the buffer zone and the rest of Lebanon, near an Israeli position at Beaufort Castle, they said.

In a statement, the Islamic Resistance, the military wing of the Hizbollah movement, said its fighters exploded a dynamite charge as an Israeli patrol passed by "causing deaths and injuries."

Israeli artillery riposted to the attack with a bombardment of the outskirts of the village of Arnoun, near Kfar Tebnit.

Three Israeli soldiers were killed and seven wounded in clashes last week with Hizbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon, where Israel set up a "security zone" in 1985 to protect its northern border from attacks.

Israel responded with a series of air raids and artillery bombardments against suspected Hizbollah positions.

Nine Israeli soldiers have been killed and 44 wounded in clashes with an Israeli guerrillas in southern Lebanon since the beginning of the year, according to figures compiled by AFP.

Prosecutor seeks to shut down Turkey's ruling Islamic party

ANKARA (AP) — In a major challenge to Turkey's Islamic political leaders, a prosecutor Wednesday asked the country's highest court to ban the governing party.

The legal challenge to the Islamic Welfare Party added a new level of tension to the conflict between secularists and Welfare politicians — including the prime minister — seeking to put a stronger Muslim stamp on Turkey.

Prosecutor Vural Savas filed an 18-page indictment, accusing the party of violating Turkey's constitutional principle that state is democratic and secular.

"Welfare has become the centre of anti-secular activities leading the country into a civil war atmosphere," Mr. Savas told reporters.

Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, who is also Welfare's leader, said the indictment surprised him and did not reflect reality.

"Welfare is a truly secular party. It is the guarantor of secularism," Mr. Erbakan said.

Yekta Gungor Ozden, the chief justice for the Supreme Court, told reporters that the court would issue its decision in six months.

Legal analysts called the challenge a serious one.

"There seems to be enough legal standing for the constitutional court to shut down Welfare," Yavuz Sabuncu, a professor of constitutional law, told the Associated Press.

The indictment refers to anti-secular statements made by Mr. Erbakan and party members.

Mr. Erbakan has alarmed Turkey's establishment and the country's allies in NATO with his moves to ease long-standing bans on Islamic clothing and to promote Islamic education.

In February, the National Security Council, whose members include top generals, issued a series of directives to halt attempts to make the country more Islamic. Mr. Erbakan has generally resisted the orders.

The development came at a time of increased speculation of early elections within the year. A ban on the party would prevent it from running in elections. Newspapers reported that Mr. Erbakan has ordered his aides to prepare to launch a new party should Welfare run into legal problems.

"Welfare is the country's biggest party and the largest vote getter," Mr. Erbakan said. "Democracy is undertaken by the people." Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, who is under pressure from her centre-right True Path to dissolve her coalition partnership with Welfare, has been trying to convince Mr. Erbakan to hand over the premiership to her, to calm down critics.

She has told her party deputies that if Mr. Erbakan does not give her the position in two weeks, she would dissolve the coalition, newspapers reported Wednesday.

Wednesday's development came a day after Mr. Erbakan's coalition government survived a censure motion in parliament. The motion was brought by opposition parties, which accused the government of undermining secularism.

This Reuters photo dated May 11 shows veiled women standing under a Turkish flag, during a rally in Istanbul's historical Blue Mosque (Sultanahmet) district, to protest at a clampdown on Islamic schools ordered by Turkey's powerful secularist military. Turkey's top prosecutor Vural Savas has called on the constitutional court in Ankara on Wednesday to outlaw Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare (Refah) Party for threatening the secularist Turkish state

Hamas leader says no deal struck for release from U.S.

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Palestinian Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzouk, who has taken refuge in Jordan, Wednesday denied any deal was struck for his release from U.S. custody.

"The truth is that there was no kind of deal to release me, rather there was American resolve to hand me over to the enemy state," the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) leader told the Kuwaiti daily Al Seyassah, referring to Israel.

"If Israel had renewed its demand (for extradition), I would have been handed over very quickly," the militant leader added in an interview from Amman.

Mr. Marzouk arrived in Jordan earlier this month after his release from a U.S. prison where he was held since U.S. immigration seized him in July 1995 for suspected terror activities.

Israel accused Mr. Marzouk of planning bomb attacks which killed dozens of civilians, but King Hussein granted him refuge after Israel dropped its extradition request fearing damage to the peace process if he was returned.

In the Kuwaiti newspaper interview, Mr. Marzouk renewed his denial of Israeli terrorism charges.

"If the case had come before an open sitting of the judiciary, it would have been a good chance for me to prove that I am innocent of charges of terrorism," Mr. Marzouk said.

The U.S. judiciary was left with "one of two choices: either to release me inside America, or expel me," said Mr. Abu Marzouk, who has insisted that he was not involved in the military activities of Hamas.

Earlier this month, Mr. Abu Marzouk, who previously had U.S. residency, told another Kuwaiti daily that he expects Israel will try to have him assassinated.

Trial postponed for key Sudanese opposition leaders

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The trial of key Sudanese opposition figures charged with treason has been suspended to encourage regional efforts towards national reconciliation, the daily Alwan newspaper reported Wednesday.

Last March the Justice Ministry said that trials would be held in absentia for several leading opponents, including former Premier Saddeq Al Mahdi, the head of the opposition Democratic Unionist Party Mohamed Osman Al Mirghani and John Garang, whose Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has been fighting the government in the south of the country since 1983.

Alwan quoted "reliable" sources as saying that the Justice Ministry had suspended the investigation procedures "to permit a chance for peaceful solutions in the context of several reconciliatory initiatives by prominent Arab and Sudanese personalities between the government and the (opposition) alliance leaders."

Khartoum's opponents were to be tried for treason, inciting war and collusion with foreign powers against the state.

According to Alwan, several prominent figures in the region have made serious efforts to promote talks between the Sudanese government and the opposition.

It said the government had accepted an initiative by the president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, to open such talks but that the opposition reportedly turned it down.

Unconfirmed reports in Khartoum said Al Sherif Zein Al Abdin Al Hindi, the former secretary general of the Democratic Unionist Party and a dissident of the opposition Democratic National Alliance, recently announced in the Syrian capital Damascus that he would arrive here next month for peace talks with the government.

S. Arabia expelling hundreds of Yemenis, newspaper reports

SANAA (AFP) — A Sanaa newspaper charged Wednesday that Saudi Arabia is kicking out hundreds of Yemenis and turning back trucks carrying Yemeni produce.

In an editorial headlined "One more crisis in Saudi-Yemeni relations," the independent Yemen Times said Saudi Arabia has intensified its hunt for Yemenis without correct work or residency permits.

"Every week now, on average, 1,500 Yemenis are arrested and deported back to Yemen," the English-language weekly said.

An unofficial source told AFP that since the end of April three ships have arrived in the Red Sea Port of Hodeida from Saudi Arabia, each carrying about 1,500 Yemenis who were expelled because their papers were not in order.

The newspaper said Saudi Arabia is refusing to let in trucks bringing Yemeni produce, which is "leading to enormous losses to the vulnerable farmers."

Traders confirmed that since the beginning of May, Saudi Arabia has not allowed in trucks transporting Yemeni fruit, vegetables and livestock.

The paper said: "The new difficulties are a direct result of the elections. Saudi Arabia sees that its protégés in the Yemeni power structure have lost some ground.

"In other words, the hands of President Ali Abdullah Saleh are strengthened."

Saleh's General People's Congress won a sweeping victory in the April 27 legislative elections, pushing back its main rival, the Islamist party Al Islah.

However, Al Islah's leader, Sheikh Abdallah Al Ahmar, who has good ties with Saudi Arabia, was reelected as parliamentary speaker.

Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani accused Saudi Arabia April 25 of providing financial backing to the leaders of Yemeni opposition groups which boycotted the elections.

Syria seeks backing from Gulf states against Turkey, Israel

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Syria has sent its vice-president to the Gulf to muster support against what it considers Israeli and Turkish threats against the Arab World.

Abdul Halim Khaddam discussed the stalemate in peace negotiations with Israel and Turkey's anti-Kurd incursion in northern Iraq during talks in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

On Wednesday, he was to travel on to Oman and Bahrain.

"We need a joint Arab stand against the threats and challenges besetting the Arab Nation," a Syrian delegate accompanying Mr. Khaddam told AFP in the UAE capital.

"We are discussing the need for a strong stand in face of the hardline Israeli stances and the Turkish-Israeli alliance, which targets all of us," the delegate said.

Peace talks between Israel and Syria have been frozen for more than a year because of differences over the point at which they should resume and because of Israel's construction of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories.

Syria insists the negotiations must reopen at the point where they broke off in February 1996 but Israel demands they restart from scratch.

The peace process between Israelis and Palestinians has also been frozen since March when the Jewish state started work on a new settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

Speaking on Abu Dhabi television late Tuesday, Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh said a fresh initiative was needed from the United States, which is co-sponsor of the peace process with Russia.

"We had expected the peace process to be completed" by now, he said, referring to the October 1991 Madrid international conference which launched the Arab-Israeli peace initiative.

"But what we see now is a faltering on the Israeli-Palestinian track, a halt on the Israeli-Syrian track, and a complete absence on the Lebanese track.

"I think that the sponsor of the process should undertake a balanced initiative and become a full partner rather than a mere carrier of views... Any more delay will mean more frustration and despair," he warned.

In Abu Dhabi, Mr. Khaddam met UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan late Tuesday to discuss the Middle East peace process and the Turkish offensive against the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

"The Turkish-Israeli alliance has targeted not only one Arab country but the entire Arab Nation," he told the official news agency WAM.

"This requires consultations among Arab leaders to discuss its repercussions and how to protect Arab interests so that this alliance will not be at the expense of those interests," said Mr. Khaddam.

Syria has maintained strong links with the Gulf monarchies since it joined a U.S.-led multinational coalition in evicting Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war.

Mr. Khaddam added: "There is a Turkish operation in north Iraq constituting an encroachment against the sovereignty of a brotherly Arab country. Syria is worried about Iraq's territory and people."

Some 10,000 Turkish troops pushed across the Iraqi border on May 14 to strike at bases of the Turkish Kurd separatists, who launch cross-border raids from Kurdish-held northern Iraq.

'Michigan wants to enhance trade with Israel'

TEL AVIV (AP) — Michigan has $100 million worth of exports to Israel each year, and if Governor John Engler has his way, that figure will only continue to increase.

"There is potential here," Mr. Engler said Monday, the second day of a four-day Mideast tour to promote trade with Michigan. "We are interested not in charity, but in treaties and cooperation."

Mr. Engler met with Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky and other Israeli officials to discuss possibilities for cooperation — particularly in the automotive field, the state's biggest business — between Michigan companies and Israel's booming hi-tech sector.

"There is extraordinary potential for our relationship to be expanded," Mr. Engler said.

Tuesday, Mr. Engler will sign a "strategic alliance" with the mayors of three cities in the central Galilee region of northern Israel to encourage more bilateral trade and partnerships between companies in Israel and Michigan.

"We are focusing on the central Galilee region as there are many high-tech companies there that we hope to match as partners for Michigan companies," Mr. Engler said. "It is one of the most exciting places in which to invest."

British squaddies fined for singing national anthem nude

NICOSIA (AFP) — Three British soldiers were fined by a Cyprus court after being caught in the early hours of Wednesday running naked through a southeastern resort town singing "God save the queen." Mike McCarthy, 19, Ronald Matthews, 22, and Paul Bray, 22, were each fined 150 Cyprus pounds ($300) after pleading guilty to charges of indecency and public disturbance in Ayia Napa. The soldiers apologised for the prank and said they would be leaving the Mediterranean island on Thursday, but Judge Antonis Listsos told them their behaviour was offensive to the morals of their host country.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

15:35 .....French programmes
16:00 .....NBA
17:00 .....Out of This World
18:00 .....French Programme
19:00 .....News in French
19:30 .....News Headlines
19:35 .....Parenthood
20:30 The American Chart Show
21:10 .....Kung Fu
22:00 .....News in Enlgish
22:35 Feature Film — "Driving Miss Daisy"
23:59 .....Taratata

PRAYER TIMES

03:59 .....Fajr
05:30 .....(Sunrise) Duha
12:32 .....Dhuhr
16:13 .....'Asr
19:34 .....Maghreb
21:05 .....'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Fine weather conditions will prevail during the weekend with winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Mini./Max. Temperatures
Amman 14/27
Aqaba 21/35
Deserts 11/30
Jordan Valley 20/36

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 26, Aqaba, 35 Humidity readings: Amman 42 per cent, Aqaba 33 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Wissam Hzayyin 748563
Dr. Munther Al Khatib 836868
Dr. Mukhles Mazahrah 820425
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyim ..620115
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy.....637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'amneh 250080
Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Al Safarini 987565
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency ...199
Rescue Police 192. 621111. 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity. ...642281/6
Akileh Maternity, ...642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Mnasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, ...775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ...865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital .....(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital .....(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital .....(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital .....(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital .....(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital .....(02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital .....(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Information on other flights are supplied on phone **08 (52700)** or **08(53250).**

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:15 .....Sanaa (RJ)
10:10 .....Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:30 .....Bombay (RJ)
10:30 .....New Delhi (RJ)
10:55 .....Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
11:05 .....Beirut (RJ)
11:30 .....Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
13:30 Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ)
15:40 New York, Amsterdam (add) (RJ)
17:10 .....Moscow (RJ)
18:15 .....Casablanca (RJ)
18:45 London, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:10 .....Athens (RJ)
19:55 ...Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
20:25 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
22:10 .....Rome (RJ)

Other Flights
13:00 .....Riyadh (SV)
13:55 .....Doha (GF)
14:40 .....Shariqah (AH)
16:00 .....Rome (AZ)
17:00 .....Dubai (EK)
21:10 .....Beirut (ME)
21:30 ..... Tel Aviv (LY)
21:35 .....Cairo (MS)
01:20 ..Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
05:40 .....London (BA)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:10 .....Moscow (RJ)
07:20 .....Beirut (RJ)
11:45 ..Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
13:00 .....Paris (RJ)
13:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
13:20 .....London (RJ)
13:20 .....Athens (RJ)
14:00 .....Rome (RJ)
21:10 .....Cairo (RJ)
21:15 .....Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:20 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
21:20 .....Jeddah (RJ)
22:50 ...Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights
04:00 .....Athens (OA)
06:15 .....Istanbul (TK)
08:45 ..... Beirut (ME)
09:10 .....London (BA)
14:30 ..... Riyadh (SV)
14:45 Bahrain, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:30 Annaba (Algeria) (AH)
17:00 .....Rome (AZ)
18:00 ....Damascus, Dubai (EK)
22:25 .....Cairo (MS)
22:50 ..... Tel Aviv (LY)
02:30 .....Amsterdam (KL)
08:45 .....Beirut (ME)
10:25 .....London (BA)

HRH Princess Aisheh Bint Al Hussein Wednesday distributes diplomas to women graduates of the Jordan Armed Forces secondary schools in Amman (Petra photo)

Princess Rahmeh opens seminar covering training of nurses

RAMTHA (Petra) — HRH Princess Rahmeh Bint Al Hassan Wednesday opened a seminar covering nursing strategies in Jordan by calling on authorities to help promote the profession of nursing in Jordan.

The seminar was held at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST).

"We consider this seminar as essential and urgent to draw attention to both this vital profession and the role of nurses in the medical profession," the Princess stated.

"Upon directives from His Majesty King Hussein, Jordan has made major strides towards promoting nursing at the university level and every year the number of students who join nursing schools increases," she affirmed.

Noting that the health ministry opened a nursing department in 1993 to further encourageme the nursing profession, Princess Rahma maintained that efforts are still needed to provide integrated nursing services and focus on the psychological, social and spiritual aspects of patient care.

HRH Princess Rahmeh Bint Al Hassan Wednesday opened a seminar covering nursing strategies in Jordan (Petra photo)

Dean of JUST Nursing College Ruweidah Maaitaa told the audience that a national nursing strategy is being formulated in conjunction with the nursing college at Windsor University in Canada.

This strategy, she said, strives to raise the quality of training in Jordan.

Other speakers covered the nature and level of nursing services in Jordanian hospitals and participants reviewed reports covering the promotion of nursing training, nursing roles in primary health care services and the future of the nursing profession in the Kingdom.

Court upholds life imprisonment term

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation Wednesday upheld a State Security Court ruling of life imprisonment with hard labour for three men, convicted in February 1997 of plotting subversion and possession of illegal arms with illicit intent.

The court, comprised of Justices Suleiman Awajan, Walid Haj Hassan, Mohammad Abu Hassan, Izzat Abdul Ruhman, and Mashour Aqleh, unanimously approved the State Security Court's ruling.

"The State Security Court's decision is comprehensive and relies on solid evidence, so we rejected the defence appeals and resolved to ratify the court's ruling," the higher court said.

Ikremah Mahmoud Ghareibeh, 28, an architect, Yousef Abdul Rahim Rababah, 27, a teacher, and Ali Mohammad Faqir, 26, unemployed, were originally sentenced to death, but the Military Court commuted the sentence to life imprisonment.

In its Feb. 17 ruling, the court said: "Since the defendants had no previous criminal record and caused neither deaths nor damages, the court has decided to reduce the sentence."

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the three suspects, who resided in the Hashmieh district of Ajloun, resolved to target Israeli tourists visiting Ajloun and Jerash, following the conclusion of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel.

According to the charge sheet, the first defendant, Ikremah Ghareibeh, had been acquainted with an officer at the Royal Engineering Corps and asked if the latter might teach him how to remove and detonate landmines.

In November of 1995, Mr. Ghareibeh dug 25 landmines in the Kafarangeh district of Ajloun and hid the explosives in a cave near the minefield for later use against Israeli tourists, the charge sheet maintained.

On Feb. 2 of last year, the three men placed the mines in a bag, stopped a pick-up truck and requested that the driver take them to the Hashmieh district.

However, the three were apprehended prior to the occurrence of any attack.

The three men pleaded guilty only to possession of illegal weapons (landmines), but denied charges of illicit intent and plotting acts of sabotage.

Last year, they told the court that the landsmines, which they collected from a field in Ajloun, were not intended for terrorist attacks but rather to "protect themselves and their families in case of an Israeli invasion."

But the court rejected their pleas, stating that the landmines they excavated were planted by Armed Forces experts to protect the country and that "[the defendants'] actions in removing these mines are considered sabotage."

UNU programmes, agenda undergo qualitative review

AMMAN (J.T.) — The nature and level of educational programmes offered by the United Nations University (UNU) Leadership Academy in Amman were reviewed at a meeting Wednesday between Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi and Dr. Adel Safti, the academy president.

The two also reviewed the projected agenda of the academy's first programme, to be organised here next month, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, who is president of the academy's consultative council.

The programme, to be studied by prominent individuals from around the world as well as the United Nations, will cover topics relevant to concepts of world peace, security, leadership in the developing world and other relevant issues.

Participating in the June meeting will be former ministers representing 60 countries.

An agreement signed by Jordan and the UNU in April of 1995 provided for the establishment of the UNU Leadership Academy, the seventh of its kind, by UNU research and training centres worldwide.

The university brings together leading global scholars to tackle problems as they relate to the UN agenda and helps mitigate the general isolation of researchers in developing countries, according to the terms of the agreement

The Leadership Academy in Amman provides training and education for potential political leaders from around the globe.

The UNU, which has a decentralised university headquarters in Tokyo, was the brainchild of former UN Secretary General U Thant who proposed the idea 20 years ago.

Dr. Mutawia and Dr. Safti also reviewed the role of the Jordanian media at this critical stage of the peace process.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali suggested that the UNU be established in Jordan in 1984, and in 1995 former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali and Queen Noor declared the formal establishment of the academy in Jordan.

Woman 'accidentally' killed in botched crime of honour

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In an apparent case of mistaken identity, a woman was reported to have been killed in her daughter's stead in the vicinity of Ma'een Health Spa Tuesday, according to official sources.

The victim, Fatmeh Za'al received at least 22 bullets in her head, back, and chest and was also stabbed several times in the neck by two of her relatives, who surrendered to police shortly after the incident, according to the sources.

A seven-year-old child, identified only as Intisar, in the house at the time of the shooting, was accidentally shot in the ankle.

According to one source, the two suspects, in their mid 20s, informed police that they mistook the woman for her 17-year-old daughter, who they claimed had a "bad reputation" and was "involved in several affairs" and that they wanted to kill her to "cleanse their family's honour."

"The two entered the victim's house at 7:30 a.m., and without saying one word, or questioning [Ms. Za'al], they started shooting at her, then stabbed her with a switch blade," the source said.

"She was killed instantly," he added.

The woman and seven-year old child were rushed to Al Nadim Hospital in Madaba, where the attending doctor declared Ms. Za'al dead on arrival.

The attending doctor at the hospital told the Jordan Times Wednesday that the child was listed in fair condition.

Police contacted by the Jordan Times Wednesday evening confirmed that a woman had been killed but refused to further comment.

Eleven woman have heretofore been killed in reported crimes of honour in the Kingdom during 1997.

Public Security department (PSD) statistics indicated that 19 women were killed in Jordan in the name of honour last year.

Three to stand trial on rape charges

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN (J.T.) — Three people, including a prominent Jordanian singer, accused of raping a 17-year old girl, will stand trial at the Criminal Court in early June, according to judicial sources.

The three men, between 30 and 40 years of age, were formally charged by the criminal prosecutor with the rape of a minor in April of this year.

"The criminal prosecutor has finished his investigations, prepared the charge sheet and transferred the case to court for trial," one judicial source said.

According to him, the victim had dropped charges against the three men, but "still they will undergo a public trial."

The Jordanian Penal Code stipulates that punishment for the rape of a woman, under the age of 18, is a minimum of five years imprisonment with hard labour.

In cases where charges have been dropped, the court might reduce the punishment to half of its original verdict.

According to judicial sources, the singer denied raping the minor, and confessed only to sexual aggression, a lesser charge.

The minor initially testified that the singer did not rape her, "but later changed her statements and said that he did have sexual intercourse with her," the source said.

The victim, who is from the West bank and was staying with family members in the Marj Al Hamam area of Amman, fought with family members and left the house, sources said.

She became depressed, wandered in the streets and signalled for a car to pull over to take her to a friend's house, one source said.

The car pulled over, the driver offered the girl a ride and she accepted and entered the vehicle, he added.

"The suspect felt that the girl was upset and after a short conversation, he convinced her to spend the night at his ranch," the source said.

In her deposition, the minor said that the suspect offered her orange juice mixed with alcohol, "then [had relations] with her while she was drunk."

The following morning, the suspect and the minor had lunch and later went to a nightclub in Amman where she met the second suspect and the singer, he said.

"After some time, the singer and the second suspect left the club with the minor, and went to one of the men's house, "where the singer and the second suspect had [relations] with the minor," the source said.

Bail, requested by defence attorneys, was summarily rejected by the court, the source said.

Suleiman Nabulsi's political legacy studied in seminar

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan's first experiment of a multi-party government in the 1950s and its political legacy, was Wednesday discussed at a seminar organised by the Ministry of Culture and the Jordanian Studies and Information Centre (JSIC).

The seminar, entitled "Suleiman Nabulsi, a reading of his biography and experiment," was opened by Minister of Culture and Youth Qasem Abu Ein who deputised for Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali

The seminar covers different aspects of an important epoch of Jordan's political history as it focuses on a critical six-month tenure of a government, ending in April 1957, but one which left its mark on the Kingdom's development and helped highlight the principles and objectives of the Great Arab Revolt, Dr. Abu Ein stated.

The minister reviewed political developments under the late King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein and later under His Majesty King Hussein, focusing on the era in which Mr. Nabulsi was prime minister.

Director of the JSIC Bilal Tall and historian Ali Mahafza presented papers focusing on the life and work of the late prime minister.

They concentrated on his participation in the Jordanian opposition at the time and his strong personality as well as his views on democracy.

A paper by Dr. Amin Mashaqbeh, former minister and lecturer in political science at the University of Applied Sciences, covered the role of political parities during Mr. Nabulsi's government.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

*"Brigada central" (pts 12, 13, 14) at the Cervantes Institute, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

*"Sleepless in Seattle" at the American Centre, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

*"The Cubist Epoch" (with commentary in Arabic by Adnan Al Sharif) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

PLAY

*French play: "Mime et Thysme" at the Royal Cultural Centre and Collee de la Salle respectively on Thursday and Friday at 8:00 p.m.

CONCERT

*Musical performance by the Jordan Centre for Music at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*Spring Exhibition of Plastic Art 97 at Greater Amman Municipality, Ras Al 'Ain, until June 30.

* "One-of-a-Kind" artists' book exhibit, at the American Centre, Abdoun, until June 25.

* Fifth exhibition of electric, electronic, and engineering industries at the Global Exhibit Centre, University Road, until May 26.

* Works by Australian artists at the Royal Cultural Centre, until May 3.

* Exhibition of works by Farouq Lambaz at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 19. Also displaying works by Paris-based Moroccan artist Najia Mahadji, until June 12, as well as showing an exhibition by architectural photographer Said Nuseibah entitled "The Farthest Mosque".

* Works by Munir Al-Ubaidi at Hamourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until May 31.

* Paintings by French-Lebanese artist Claire Chevollear at Orient Gallery, Issam Ajlouni Street (Tel. 681303/4), until May 29.

* Photography exhibition by Samer Bqayeen at the Cervantes Institute, Jabal Amman, until May 31.

* Spring exhibition '97 entitled "Spring is Blooming" at the Jordan River Designs (Tel. 613061/2), until May 31.

* Works by Omar Shahwan at Offali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until May 29.

* Works by Issam Tantawi at Alia Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until May 29.

* "The Water of Deserts" at Natural Resources Authority until May 22.

* Display of caricature drawings by Imad Hajjaj at Balqa Art Gallery, Fuheis, until May 25.

* Photo exhibition entitled "Fragments" by Wa'ed Al Masri at The Gallery, Hotel Inter Continental, Jabal Amman until May 22.

* Display of paintings, sculpures, mosaic, ceramics works, jewellery and food products of Dana Valley at the Embassy of Pakistan, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 23.

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Afghanistan's anti-Taleban alliance enters critical phase

KABUL (AFP) — Afghanistan's anti-Taleban forces held crisis talks Wednesday to shore up their alliance, after a defection in their ranks led to the hardline militia gaining valuable ground, an alliance spokesman said.

The advance of the purist-Muslim militia can only be stemmed if the emergency negotiations persuade Abdul Malik to rejoin the forces of northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum, Mr. Abdullah said.

"High level negotiations are still going on with Abdul Malik, and this is a very sensitive and critical situation for us.

"The defection of Malik and the loss of so much ground is a very big setback, but there is a chance he can be convinced to change his mind," Mr. Abdullah said.

Mr. Malik, who was a senior commander in Gen. Dostum's forces, Monday switched allegiance to the Taleban, taking with him two provinces and allowing the Taleban to march into another he had cut off.

The Taleban, taking advantage of the revolt in the alliance ranks, launched a major offensive Tuesday making crucial gains in central and northern Afghanistan, although issuing conflicting reports on the extent of its gains.

Despite claims late Tuesday that they had captured three northwestern provinces of Badghis, Faryab and Sar-e-Pol, Taleban officials here said Wednesday their forces had not yet entered Faryab province — Mr. Malik's stronghold. And they added their forces have been blocked at the border with Badghis by soldiers reluctant to hand the territory over.

The opposition alliance has conceded that the revolt resulted in the Taleban capturing a key opposition ally, former Herat City Governor Ismael Khan who commanded a force of 2,000 fighters.

Mr. Khan was grabbed by advancing Taleban fighters between the northwest frontlines and the opposition's northern Afghan base during the uprising.

"We lost contact with Ismael Khan Monday afternoon and it seems the reports of his arrest by the Taleban are true," Mr. Abdullah said.

Mr. Malik's defection sent shockwaves through Gen. Dostum's northern capital of Mazar-I-Sharif, where witnesses said the relatively-liberal residents feared an imminant takeover by the Muslim fundamentalists.

"The mood is a little bit calmer than yesterday (Tuesday), but the atmosphere among people here now is of resignation and impotency," a Western aid worker based in the city told AFP Wednesday.

Mr. Malik, like Gen. Dostum, is an ethnic Uzbek, and opposition officials said the ethnic factor may prove the loyalty-clinching incentive in their battle against the mainly-pashtoon Taleban.

"There is no way the Taleban will allow Malik to keep the independence he enjoyed under Gen. Dostum, and he has to realise he will be committing suicide if he joins up with them," Mr. Abdullah said.

The opposition alliance was desperately trying to exploit these differences, he said, and was encouraged by reports that the Taleban has yet to officially join forces with Mr. Malik.

"I have heard reports that some of Malik's forces have clashed with the Taleban when they were asked to hand over their weapons," Mr. Abdullah said.

The chief of the Taleban has urged all opposition forces to surrender offering them amnesty, warning that those who did not would be tried by Islamic courts.

Mullah Mohammad Omar pledged full protection to those who voluntarily stop fighting and hand over their arms to the militia.

Sources in Mazar-i-Sharif said Gen. Dostum has planned a safe exit route from the city if the Taleban advanced any farther.

"Some Dostum aides said the general wants to stand and fight, but he said it may be futile and cause massive bloodshed in the city," another independent source in the city added.

The alliance opposing the Taleban is made up of Gen. Dostam, the forces of ousted Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani under his chief military Commander Ahmad Shah Masood and the Shiite Muslim Hezb-i-Wahdat faction based in the central province of Bamiyan.

The Taleban, which overran the capital Kabul last September, controls at least two-thirds of Afghanistan, and have vowed to bring a "pure Islamic state" to a country gripped by over 17 years of civil war.

Russia may reconsider NATO agreement if Baltics invited

MOSCOW (R) — Russia said Tuesday it would reconsider its new partnership with NATO if the Western alliance moved towards offering membership to the Baltic states.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Valery Nesterushkin reiterated remarks by President Boris Yeltsin Monday that Moscow would not tolerate any attempts to grant NATO membership to former Soviet republics.

"As far as the Baltic countries are concerned, you probably noted what our President Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin said during a meeting with leaders of our parliament," Mr. Nesterushkin told a regular briefing.

"It was clearly said that, in the case of such ideas taking on a more concrete form, then Russia has the possibility and the grounds to reconsider the character of its relations."

The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and regained independence in 1991.

Russia agreed to a new security partnership with NATO last week after months of negotiations, clearing the way for the Atlantic alliance to invite new members from Eastern Europe at its July summit in Madrid.

Mr. Yeltsin is expected to sign the NATO-Russia pact at a meeting with Western leaders in Paris on May 27.

Russia remains opposed to NATO expansion, expected initially to bring in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. But NATO leaders have said no outside country can veto who joins the alliace in the future.

During a meeting with leaders of the opposition-dominated parliament Monday, Mr. Yeltsin said: "If NATO begins to take decisions without taking account of Russia's opinion, Russia will review its relations with the alliance."

Mr. Yeltsin is trying to strike a balance between cooperating with the West and calming nationalist and Communist fears over NATO expansion, which they see as a threat to Russian security.

Russia's security deal with NATO sets up a new NATO-Russia permanent joint council, with monthly meetings by ambassadors and twice-yearly gatherings of foreign and defence ministers.

U.S. officials said Russia would have a veto power within that council but stressed that the North Atlantic Council — made up of the 16 current NATO members — would continue to set alliance policy and would not be subject to any Russian block.

Possible NATO membership for the Baltics, which have sizeable ethnic Russian minorities, is a particularly sensitive issue for Moscow.

As many Russians see it, if both Poland and Lithuania were to become NATO members then Russia's Kaliningrad region, part of Prussia seized from Nazi Germany at the end of World War II, would be completely cut off from the rest of Russia by a potentially hostile alliance.

Latvia and Estonia also both border on Russia.

The Baltic states, which view NATO membership as a shield against Russian domination, Tuesday reiterated their firm desire to join the alliance.

"Our position regarding NATO membership does not change," Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas told Reuters. "Lithuania was forcefully incorporated into the Soviet Union and does not consider itself a former republic of the Soviet Union."

The state secretary of the Latvian Foreign Ministry, Maris Riekstinsh, said: "It is unfortunate that just a few days after an agreement in principle has been reached between Russia and NATO Russia's politicians are already doubting fundamental positions therein."

Talbott: New threat could alter NATO pledges

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. Deputy Secretary Of State Strobe Talbott said Tuesday NATO's pledge not to station nuclear arms and "substantial" troops in new member states could be changed if a new threat develops.

He also reaffirmed the U.S. view that alliance membership will remain open to an unlimited number of countries, including Russia, after a first group is chosen in July and he rejected criticism that expansion will dilute NATO's strength.

Mr. Talbott's comments, in a speech to the Atlantic Council, is part of a Clinton administration campaign to persuade Americans and the U.S. Senate to back expansion as well as to reassure would-be NATO member countries that do not make the first cut when alliance leaders meet on July 8-9 in Madrid.

In the United States, expansion costs — $200 million a year for 10 years — may be debated more than expansion itself and many senators may not support the process if they feel Washington is bearing too much of the burden, he said.

As part of an agreement reached last week in which Russia acceded to NATO expansion plans and settled on criteria for dealing with the alliance in the future, NATO said it had no plans, intentions or need to station nuclear arms on the territories of the new member states.

Aiming to calm Russian fears and opposition to expansion, NATO also stated it would carry out its missions without stationing a substantial number of combat troops in the new member states.

Mr. Talbott, in his speech, stressed that "these are... reassertions of NATO's own policy ... they are not negotiated limits on NATO's freedom of action.

"The alliance reserves the unilateral right to reassess the security environment at any time and, if it felt there was a new challenge, to change deployments accordingly," he said.

Asia-Pacific nations wary, but seek dialogue with China

MANILA (AFP) — Asia-Pacific nations are seeking a dialogue with China but remain wary of its intentions in the region, U.S. and Philippine defence officials said here Wednesday.

"Everywhere I travel, talking with leaders of all nations, the subject of China never fails to come up and it is the backdrop in which all our discussions occur," U.S. Admiral Joseph Prueher, commander-in-chief of the U.S. forces in the Pacific, said.

Philippine Defence Secretary Renato De Villa said the main concern of the Philippines and other countries that use the South China Sea for commerce is "China's seemingly very firm and very strong position that the South China Sea belongs to China."

"It is in this area of concern that we are trying to develop a dialogue (with China)," Mr. De Villa said at a Pacific Basin Economic Council conference he and Adm. Prueher attended.

China and the Philippines are engaged in a diplomatic tussle over certain areas of the Spratly Islands, and Scarborough Shoal in the MacClesfield Bank, both in the South China Sea.

The disputes have been highlighted by an exchange of diplomatic protests over recent incursions in the area.

At his weekly press conference Wednesday, Mr. Ramos brushed aside Chinese concerns over Scarborough and asserted that the Philippines had sovereignty over the shoal which he said was within the country's exclusive economic zone.

Earlier Wednesday, Mr. Ramos met with Chinese Vice-Premier Li Lanqing but he said they did not discuss security matters.

Mr. De Villa said that until the Philippines has "a real understanding of China's long-term position we just have to be continuously aware" of its moves in the area.

China's position on the South China Sea is in conflict with the U.N. convention on the law of the sea, he said, reiterating the Philippine call for all claimants to the area to comply with such "international laws and conventions."

Mr. De Villa said the Philippines would continue to engage China in "productive dialogue," citing the coming bilateral talks between the two governments in Beijing on May 26.

Adm. Prueher noted that it would take a decade and a half before China would have a "modernised force projection capability," while maintaining that the United States did not consider China a threat to its interests in the region.

He said U.S. policy to China would always be one of "constructive engagement," which he described as being in the middle of the two poles of "appeasement and containment."

Adm. Prueher added that "we all with you look at Hong Kong as a harbinger" of China's future behaviour, referring to China's takeover on July 1 of the British colony.

"I am not optimistic that it will be trouble free, but I am optimistic it will work out," Adm. Prueher said.

Yuri Deryabin, deputy secretary of the Russian Security Council, said the Russia-Chinese cooperation agreement signed last April, did not threaten the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. Deryabin, who addressed the council with Mr. De Villa and Adm. Prueher, said "this cooperation with China should not be directed to undermine any third country in the region. This is one of the preconditions of the partnership."

He admitted that China was one of the major purchasers of Russian weaponry in recent years but said Russia was not selling the type of weapons that would destabilise the region.

Russia has sold 72 SU-27 fighter bomber aircraft to Beijing which has also considered purchasing Italian and French missiles, early warning radar aircraft from Britain worth more than $400 million and British Rolls Royce RB-199 engines for its Tornado fighters.

Shuttle will not flush Mir's water

JOHNSON SPACE CENTRE, Texas (R) — NASA officials turned down a request from the crew of space station Mir to flush away gallons of water thought to be tainted by poisonous antifreeze, space agency officials said Tuesday.

Mission managers decided there was no time to consider the safety implications of dumping the water overboard from the shuttle Atlantis, said Frank Culbertson, who oversees NASA's missions to Mir.

Atlantis has been berthed at the orbiting Russian space station since Friday night for a crew exchange and to deliver much-needed supplies.

"We'll look at how we can take care of this problem in the future," he said. "It's a good idea. It just needs to be done in an orderly fashion."

The astronauts and cosmonauts were well advanced with preparations to flush the water overboard through the shuttle's waste water vent, when mission control informed the crew that the plan had been aborted.

"They've been filling (water) bags over there like crazy," shuttle skipper Charlie Precourt radioed the ground.

Mir's Russian crew was eager to dump the water to clear some of the clutter that has accumulated in the space station's seven interconnected modules.

Mission managers were concerned the plastic bags containing the water could burst or leak and damage the shuttle's delicate electronics.

The 79 gallons of water had been recycled from Mir's air supply, but was ruled unsafe to drink because of possible contamination by ethylene glycol antifreeze that had leaked from Mir's cooling system.

The shuttle was to return to Earth with samples of the water for testing. If found to be tainted, it could be dumped overboard on the shuttle's next visit to Mir, Mr. Culbertson said.

The crew of Atlantis had completed 87 per cent of their deliveries to Mir and were on track to uncouple from the space station as planned Wednesday evening, Mission Operations Director Lee Briscoe told a news conference Tuesday.

The shuttle will leave behind British-born Astronaut Michael Foale for a four-month tour of duty on Mir.

Bangladesh cyclone leaves hundreds dead

DHAKA (R) — More than a million people were left homeless or otherwise affected by a cyclone in Bangladesh in which hundreds of people are reported to have died, relief officials said Wednesday.

The current death toll of 112 might rise, with some 1,500 fishermen still missing in the Bay of Bengal, the officials said.

"Many of them may not return eventually," one official in Cox's Bazar said.

Officials Tuesday night said nearly 400,000 houses had been damaged and 15,000 cattle killed. More than 1.5 million people were made homeless or otherwise affected, they said.

One official said: "We are making a full assessment of the losses, which may take a week or more. But so far it looks like that the extent (of damage) is within a manageable limit.

"However, many areas remain out of reach and may have suffered wider damage," said the official supervising relief operations in southeastern areas of the country that bore the brunt of the storm.

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wednesday would fly to devastated areas that she could not reach in her first trip Tuesday.

Bangladesh's worst cyclone in 1991 killed at least 138,000 people and left at least one million homeless.

"We are not appealing for international help but of course will welcome (it) if anyone offers to assist," Mrs. Hasina said Tuesday. She urged Bangladeshis to donate generously to a relief fund.

Newspapers said the cyclone, roaring in from the Bay of Bengal, had killed between 350 and 500 and at least 5,000 people were injured.

The official figure for injuries was "thousands," the Cyclone Preparedness Centre in Chittagong Port City said.

This low-lying South Asian nation, put on a virtual war footing after the cyclone hit, has launched a huge rescue and relief operation in areas devastated Monday.

Army, naval and police units joined thousands of volunteers fanning out across the coastal regions.

The cyclone ravaged Chittagong, the Cox's Bazar and Tenkaf districts and several islands Monday with winds of more than 200 kph.

Banned group blamed for Indonesian election violence

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesian authorities have blamed a left-wing group outside the country's rigid political system for escalating street violence during the campaign for the May 29 general elections.

Australian and U.S. embassies advised their citizens living in Jakarta to be watchful for the possibility of more violence, citing widespread clashes in the capital and elsewhere on the country's main Java Island over the last four days.

Lieutenant-General Syarwan Hamid, head of the socio-political section of Indonesia's powerful and politicised military, was quoted by the official Antara news agency Wednesday as blaming the illegal left-wing People's Democratic Party (PRD) for the campaign disturbances.

"I have come to the conclusion we must suspect the PRD as being behind the acts of violence," Gen. Hamid told a closed-door meeting of media editors Tuesday.

"The phenomena and indications of the PRD's involvement in the riots are there," he said, a reference to a number of leaflets found at campaign rallies advocating replacing the government and current political laws, including those which give the military a powerful role in internal affairs.

Indonesia allows only three political parties — the ruling Golkar, the Muslim-based United Development Party (PPP) and the Christian-nationalist Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) — to contest elections. All of them are required to swear to abide by state ideology and refrain from open criticism of the government and the political system.

Gen. Hamid had also blamed the PRD for riots which broke out in Jakarta in July last year after PDI chief Megawati Sukarnoputri, the charismatic daughter of late founding President Sukarno, was ousted by a government-backed faction.

Most PRD leaders were arrested and subsequently convicted of subversion. Twelve of its seniormost leaders have been sentenced to up to 13 years in prison.

Most of the violence since the start of the campaign has stemmed from clashes between supporters of the PPP and Golkar. The PPP, whose ranks have been swelled by a growing informal alliance between its supporters and those of Ms. Megawati, has also clashed several times with security forces.

Australia announces heavy cut to 1997/98 immigration

MELBOURNE (R) — Australia Wednesday heavily cut its annual immigration intake for the second consecutive year, citing concerns over stubbornly high unemployment.

Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said the number of migrants allowed into the country in the year from July would be cut more than eight per cent to 68,000 from 74,000 in 1996/97, with a shift in focus to work skills instead of family reunion.

"The government believes that because of high levels of unemployment, a further reduction in migration is desirable at this time," Mr. Ruddock said.

Mr. Ruddock denied the government was bowing to pressure from race row MP Pauline Hanson, who has demanded an immediate ban on migrants to help combat Australia's chronic unemployment.

"... This is not a response to the comments of Pauline Hanson. If it were a response to Pauline Hanson there would probably be no programme at all," he told reporters.

Voters have flocked to Hanson's newly-formed One Nation party, which leading opinion polls now rank as potentially the third force in politics, ahead of the Australian Democrats.

Australia's jobless rate has remained stuck above 8.5 per cent for more than a year and the government has forecast little improvement over the next year.

Burma holds NLD activists ahead of poll anniversary

BANGKOK (AFP) — Burma's military rulers have started rounding up National League for Democracy (NLD) activists ahead of next week's anniversary of abortive general elections in 1990, reliable sources said Wednesday.

The sweep follows a pattern set last year when the junta took in more than 260 NLD supporters to thwart plans for a major party congress coinciding with the anniversary of the May 27, 1990, ballot.

Another NLD bid to hold a party meeting last September was similarly blocked. NLD supporters in Mandalay and Sagaing divisions planning to attend a party meeting next Tuesday at the home of NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi have been picked up by security forces, the reliable sources said.

Reached by telephone in Burma, the sources added that activists in Mon state and Ayeyarwaddy division had been "requested" not to leave the area.

The official sweep against NLD members is expected to continue over the next few days. No reliable figures were as yet available on those detained.

Burmese government officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

Other Rangoon-based sources said that a large number of NLD activists had been contacted by authorities in recent days and advised against trying to attend the party meeting.

A CLOSE CALL: Spanish banderillero (assistant bullfighter) Jose Castilla holds on to one of the horns of a fighting bull during a bullfight in Madrid's Las Ventas Bullring Tuesday. Castilla escaped without injury from the incident at the traditional San Isidro Bullfighting Festival (Reuter photo)

Sri Lankan rebels launch surprise attack on troops

COLOMBO (R) — Tamil Tiger rebels launched a surprise attack on Sri Lankan troops in northern areas freshly captured by the army in the latest offensive launched last week, military officials in the north said Wednesday.

They said a large number of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels attacked the army's forward defence lines near Nedunkeni in the northern Wanni region late Tuesday, but were repulsed.

"A large number of Tigers attacked the army at Othiyamalai, Nedunkeni but were repulsed after the army used heavy weapons to fire at them," one official said.

Other officials said one soldier was killed and three wounded in the attack. Rebel casualties were not known.

Troops captured Nedunkeni, about 25 kilometres northeast of Vavuniya, and Omanthai, 14 kilometres north of Vavuniya, last week after launching "Operation Jaya Sikuru," or "Sure Of Victory."

Troops, backed by tanks, artillery and air cover, broke out of Vavuniya, 220 kilometres north of the capital Colombo, in a bid to open a supply route to the Jaffna peninsula further north.

According to official figures given by the Defence Ministry, 67 soldiers have been killed and 96 wounded in the offensive. But hospital sources said some 320 soldiers had been wounded.

The ministry says rebel radio transmissions intercepted by the troops indicate that 181 Tigers have been killed and 316 wounded in the latest fighting. It said the dead included several rebel leaders.

The LTTE have accused the military of killing Tamil civilians and destroying property under the pretext of opening a supply route, and of routinely exaggerating the rebel death toll.

A statement from LTTE's international headquarters in London Wednesday accused the army of "pursuing a scorched earth policy."

"The lush farmlands of Omanthai, Puliyankulaman and Nedunkeni are no more. Armoured vehicles and tanks have been deliberately tearing up paddy fields and banana plantations," the statement said.

The LTTE, fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in mainly Sinhalese Sri Lanka's north and east, control vast swathes of land in the mostly shrub-covered Wanni.

Two army divisions are moving on two separate flanks in what military analysts said was an attempt to cut across the LTTE-held areas to ensure that the rebels are thinly spread on the ground and unable to launch a concerted attack on security forces.

Aid workers said food was running low in the Wanni, where civilians have been displaced by the offensive.

The military spokesman has denied the food shortage saying enough stocks were sent before the offensive began.

Tamil politicians have appealed to President Chandrika Kumaratunga to stop the offensive.

"It is clear that the strategy of winning peace by military action has failed," Tamil United Liberation Front President M. Sivasithamparam said in a letter to Mrs. Kumaratunga.

The government says more than 50,000 people have been killed in the war, now in its 14th year. The LTTE say the toll is higher.

Moscow apologises for intercepting Chechen plane

MOSCOW (AFP) — Moscow apologised Wednesday for an incident in which Russian fighter jets intercepted a plane taking a Chechen delegation to an international conference in the Hague, and said the trip could go ahead.

Russian Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin, the head negotiator with Chechenya, told Echo Moscow radio that "over-zealous officials must not be allowed to break the fragile trust built between the Russian Federation and Chechenya."

"Certain officials are too slow to grasp the meaning of the agreement on peace and the principles of relations between Chechenya and Russia," he said.

The incident late Tuesday was the first row since the historic May 12 signing of a peace agreement between Russia and Chechenya, which ended a 21-month war last year, leaving the tiny north Caucasus republic with de facto independence.

Chechen Vice-President Vakha Arsanov, who was heading the delegation to the Netherlands, described it as a "gross and shameful violation" of the peace accord and ordered all Russian officials out of the tiny, separatist republic.

The plane was on its way to Odessa, Ukraine, where it was to make a stopover before continuing to the Hague for a four-day conference on the Chechen-Russian conflict.

Shortly after taking off from their capital Grozny, the Chechens were ordered to land in the southern Russian town of Mineralnoye Vody and go through customs or return to Grozny.

Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin issued an order Wednesday that the Chechen leaders must be allowed to travel, Interfax quoted the Security Council spokesman as saying. This had been coordinated with Russian customs, aviation and Foreign Ministry officials, he said.

ITAR-TASS quoted the Kremlin's representative in Grozny saying that a team of Russian customs officials had arrived in the city and that the Chechen delegation was now free to leave for the Hague.

After the conference, organised by the Dutch Institute of International Relations and the Carnegie Endowment, the delegation was to visit a number of Arab countries.

Freedom of travel for the Chechen leaders, mostly former guerrilla commanders in the devastating war, is a particularly sensitive topic.

Chechenya insists it is independent and Moscow says the region is still part of Russia, but the Muslim republic is landlocked and its declaration of independence has not been recognised abroad.

In April, President Aslan Maskhadov, the military commander in the war, flew to Saudi Arabia to make a pilgrimmage to Mecca along with several hundred Chechens.

In a compromise, the Russians allowed the trip and the Chechens agreed to check their old Soviet passports with Russian customs agents specially flown in to Grozny.

Chirac puts French vote spotlight on Europe

PARIS (AFP) — French President Jacques Chirac, putting Europe into the spotlight of the French electoral campaign, has called for a vote for the rightwing coalition to ensure France speaks with a united voice.

Hundreds of thousands of French voters are still seemingly undecided just four days ahead of the first round of the May 25 and June 1 legislative polls, but the key issue of Europe is seen as a winner for the right.

Mr. Chirac, speaking before meeting German Chancellor Helmut Kohl at the Elysee Palace Tuesday, pledged: "France will keep its European commitments with lu-cidity and pragmatism."

But he added that the country "cannot defend its interests unless it is capable of speaking with one voice, a strong voice."

Mr. Chirac, aware of sensitivities over his position as president, had not been expected to make a national address before the first round of voting, but his remarks was seen by Wednesday's French press as succeeding in bringing the election campaign back on to home ground.

Polls predict a narrow victory for the ruling right in the vote to France's 577-seat National Assembly, while underlining wide disenchantment and gloom, which has left one out of three voters undecided a week before the vote.

Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin had been forced on to the defensive eaerlier Tuesday, denying that power-sharing between his party and Mr. Chirac would make any difference to French policy on Europe.

Speaking in Toulouse, Mr. Jospin said: "It is obvious that in case of power-sharing, France will speak with one voice."

In an earlier interview published Tuesday Mr. Jospin said there would be no "muddle" over Europe if his opposition coalition wins the elections. But he said the Socialists, fighting in an alliance with the Eurosceptic Communists and the Greens, would reassess the so-called stability pact adopted at last December's European Union summit in Dublin.

With Labour now in office in Britain, a leftwing-led France could "discuss these questions" in a "less timid and less passive" way, he said.

He described the stability pact, which sets penalties for governments that do not respect single currency rules, as "a concession" and "absurd," adding: "I have no reason to feel committed by this."

His statements came hot on the heels of a stiff warning from Prime Minister Alain Juppe that "cohabitation" or power-sharing between left and right would "muddle" Europe policy at a key stage in monetary union and European construction.

Mr. Kohl himself, asked to assess chances that the left might stage an upset win the polls, refused to be drawn, telling reporters: "If I answer you, you would say that Chancellor Kohl was interfering in France's internal affairs. I have firm faith in the wisdom of the French."

However, the German Chancellor risked being accused of interference after he dismissed calls, made by the Socialists, for new talks to revise plans for the creation of a single European currency. He said he "could not see why we should talk about the euro again."

The meeting itself with Mr. Chirac, formally long planned, was itself hoped for by Mr. Chirac as a boost in the run up to the voting Sunday.

Mr. Chirac is keen to take on the statesman role in the run up to the poll, and his meeting with Mr. Kohl followed his return Sunday from China via Moscow.

With record post-war unemployment at the centre of the electorate's concerns, the Socialist Party is pledging to realign European policy and convergence criteria with a view to creating jobs. The ruling centre-right says Europe will bring new growth that in turn will spell employment.

Fall of Mobutu is turning point for Africa

NAIROBI (AFP) — The victory of Laurent Kabila in what was Zaire is a turning point in African history, bringing both hope and great uncertainty, analysts say.

Optimists see the renamed Democratic Republic of Congo shaking off the disastrous effects of ousted President Mobutu Sese Seko's "kleptocracy" and become a source of wealth, peace and stability.

The doom merchants fear an implosion amid ethnic quarrels, secessionist moves and economic problems, provoking a massive human catastrophe.

The South African Foreign Ministry Tuesday predicted an African renaissance, as a diplomat remarked that the successful rebellion by Mr. Kabila had tolled the death knell for a post-colonial concept which had lasted 30 years.

The diplomat said the developments were a stunning setback for France in particular, which had backed Mr. Mobutu and will now have to learn to react in time to the changes within African countries.

Other states in the traditional French sphere of influence, though traumatised by events in Zaire, were not immune to revolution, the diplomat said.

According to a very well-informed source, as early as last November Mr. Kabila contacted a French ambassador in the region, hoping to meet him. But Paris, still sticking by Mr. Mobutu, told its envoy to do nothing.

The United States, meanwhile, sent emissaries openly to Mr. Kabila's headquarters in Goma, and when he moved to Lubumbashi in mineral-rich Katanga province, U.S. and other foreign businessmen followed to sign contracts.

"It was indecent, these people with their checkbooks," a French diplomat sniffed, noting that at the same time thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees trapped in Zaire were dying of neglect.

Observers said that the new Democratic Republic of Congo was expected to turn away from Francophone Africa and look southwards. It could for example build on its links with South Africa forged during Pretoria's attempts to mediate between Mr. Kabila and Mr. Mobutu, joining the 12-nation Southern African Development Community.

Angola will also be strengthened by Kabila's arrival in power with the backing of President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, who will be helped in his own war against separatists in the enclave of Cabinda and his rivalry with Mobutu-ally Jonas Savimbi.

Hutu guerrillas fighting the Tutsi governments in Rwanda and Burundi will similarly be denied their rear bases in eastern Zaire.

Another Kabila ally, Uganda, can also feel more secure.

Mr. Kabila himself, though, will have to find new motives for keeping his victorious alliance of various ethnic groups and factions together, now that its common enemy Mr. Mobutu has gone.

Hubble forecasts Mars weather for July 4

WASHINGTON (R) — The Hubble space telescope Tuesday forecast Martian weather — cold and cloudy, with a possible transition to blowing pink dust — in preparation for the July 4 landing of the Mars Pathfinder spacecraft.

"If we had to make a forecast for Mars right now, we'd say it's going to be cold and it's going to be cloudy," Steve Lee, an astronomer who studies Mars, told a news conference at the headquarters of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Even on the warmest day on Mars, the temperature only occasionally climbs to 0 degrees Fahrenheit and can drop as much as 212 F from day to night, NASA scientists said.

Hubble images made on March 30 show a very different view of the red planet from those taken in the 1970s by the Viking and Mariner 9 spacecraft, which showed a dusty, static ORB with patchy clouds, the scientists said.

These new images show a planet subject to violent and sweeping climate change, with long periods of supercold weather under high icy clouds alternating with spates of smoglike blowing pink dust storms spawned when Mars comes closest to the sun in its elliptical orbit.

The images also show a seasonally waxing and waning ice cap around the planet's north pole, surrounded by dark sand dunes. Also visible are volcanoes, canyons and deserts.

Judging by Hubble images made on March 30, NASA scientists believe Pathfinder will land on the red planet during a period of transition between the cold, cloudy period and the dust storms.

Pathfinder, slowed in its descent by a cocoon of air bags, is expected to land with a bounce in an area known as Ares Valles on July 4.

Ares Valles is at the mouth of what remains of an ancient catastrophic outflow channel, said Matthew Golombek, chief project scientist for Pathfinder.

It is a place where vast amounts of water may have been forced through a narrow space in a very brief period of time, dragging along rocks and other debris.

"It would be as if all the water in the Great Lakes was forced into a narrow channel to the Gulf of Mexico in about a two-week period," Mr. Golombek said.

Albright plans visit to Balkans

WASHINGTON (R) — Madeleine Albright, in a bid to give new momentum to flagging Bosnian peace efforts, will make her first trip as secretary of state to Sarajevo later this month, the State Department said Tuesday.

"There is a lot of concern" that parties to the 1995 U.S.-mediated Bosnia peace accord are "falling down on their commitments, and they need to be reminded of it," spokesman Nicholas Burns said in announcing Mrs. Albright's travel plans.

Mrs. Albright might also visit other Balkan areas during her foreign trip.

Mr. Burns said she would leave Sunday for Paris, where she would meet French officials Monday ahead of Tuesday's signing of the new Russia-NATO partnership accord. Talks with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov are also possible.

She will join President Bill Clinton in the Hague for the U.S.-European Union summit and then flies Wednesday night to Sintra, Portugal, for a semi-annual NATO foreign ministers meeting that will focus on alliance expansion plans. There will also be a meeting of foreign ministers from countries involved in implementing the Bosnia peace deal.

Mr. Burns said that in Portugal the ministers would review "all aspects" of alliance plans to decide at their July 8-9 summit in Madrid which former Communist states will become NATO's first post-cold war members.

"No formal decisions will be taken in Sintra on who will be invited to join NATO but there will be many discussions among the ministers in Sintra about that issue," Mr. Burns said.

He added that Mrs. Albright "considers this meeting in Portugal to be among the most important that she has had."

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are top contenders to become the first new NATO members. Romania and Slovenia are pushing hard but U.S. officials have said the Clinton administration is disinclined to support them at this point.

Mr. Burns said Mrs. Albright's schedule was not yet firm but she would visit Sarajevo the weekend of May 31 for talks with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic. She also is "considering a range of other options ... in the Balkans" and will visit U.S. troops in the region, he said.

Mrs. Albright aims to press Bosnia's three rival ethnic groups — Serbs, Croats and Muslims — as well as Croatia and Serbia to implement the Bosnia peace deal. They have lagged in cooperating with the war crimes tribunal and allowing displaced persons to return to their homes, he said.

"We've had a number of concerns, particularly about Croatia and Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs, about their faithfulness to the Dayton Accords," Mr. Burns said, adding that Mrs. Albright is "laying a very heavy emphasis on Bosnia."

During talks in Washington last week, Mrs. Albright scolded Foreign Minister Mate Granic over Croatia's treatment of Serbs and other peace accord violations. She took the unusual step of letting her spokesman publicly describe the meeting and proclaim Mrs. Albright was dissatisfied with the response.

She and other officials have warned that Croatia will never realise its dream of inclusion in western institutions, including NATO, if it does not adhere to the Bosnia peace deal, a point Mr. Burns reiterated Tuesday.

As for the other parties, Mr. Burns noted Washington has kept secondary sanctions on Serbia — including opposing Belgrade's access to international financial institutions — until Serbia cooperates with the war crimes tribunal and stops repressing ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

"For the Bosnian Serbs, there's no hope of economic development there if they don't get their act together and comply with the Dayton Accords," he said.

Bones found in Patagonia provide 'missing link' between dinosaurs, birds

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Argentine researchers have discovered fossilised bones of a 90-million-year-old dinosaur with forefeet folded back like bird wings, expedition head Fernando Novas said here Tuesday.

The dinosaur, found in Patagonia State in western Argentina, represents the "missing link" between dinosaurs and birds in the evolutionary chain, Mr. Novas said.

The dinosaur — named Unenlagia, a local Indian word meaning "half-bird" — demonstrates that birds are direct descendants of dinosaurs, Mr. Novas told a press conference at the National Geographic Society, which financed his expedition.

Mr. Novas' team found 22 fossilised bones in January 1996 in Sierra Del Portezuelo and painstakingly assembled them for shipment to the capital Buenos Aires, about 1,300 kilometres east of the site.

The carnivorous Unenlagia, 1.2 metres high and 2.3 metres long, could not fly but flapped its forefeet like wings, said Mr. Novas, adding that the hind legs enabled it to run rapidly.

Unenlagia, living in a period when birds had already entered the evolutionary chain, could be considered a cousin of the 145-million-year-old bird archaeopteryx, sharing a common ancestor with it, team member Hans Dieter Sues said.

Buddhist monks die in U.S. crash

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — A van carrying senior Buddhist monks from Thailand flipped over on a California highway, killing seven people and injuring seven others, state authorities and hospital officials said Tuesday.

The monks were travelling from northern to southern California when their driver lost control of the van Monday night on Interstate 5 near Coalinga, about 260 kilometres south of San Francisco, the California Highway Patrol said.

The van rolled over several times, throwing at least 10 of the passengers onto the highway. High winds were blamed for the accident.

Seven people died in the accident, and the seven who suffered injuries were taken to local hospitals, state highway officials said.

Of the 14 men in the van, 11 of them were Buddhist monks from Thailand, one was a Buddhist monk from California, and two other passengers were not monks.

Six of the Thai monks died and six other monks were injured, according to the Wat Thai Temple in North Hollywood, which helped to organise their visit to California. Of the two passengers in the van who were not monks, one died and the other was injured.

Kanokporn Konkankit, who works at the temple, said the monks came to California to celebrate religious ceremonies at the Wat Thai Temple and at another temple near San Francisco.

The monks arrived in California on May 6 and were expected to fly home Wednesday, Mr. Konkankit said. They were driving from the San Francisco-area temple to Wat Thai when they crashed.

Mr. Konkankit said monks gathered at the Wat Thai Temple Tuesday to pray for the men who died in the accident.

Three of the crash victims were taken to the University Medical Centre in Fresno, California, where two were listed in serious but stable condition, and the third was in critical condition.

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Europe's commendable role

IT IS difficult to say that European mediation efforts can fill the blanks left by U.S. mediators. But European Union (EU) special envoy Miguel Moratinos has to be given credit for trying anyway. With the American envoy Dennis Ross's own initiative declared almost bankrupt, there is room for Europe to step in at least to keep the peace process alive. This Mr. Moratinos will attempt to do, as he himself declares, by complementing whatever work Ambassador Ross did in his bids to save the Oslo accords rather than begin anew and go it alone. In this regard, the European intervention should be encouraged and promoted by all sides.

Most probably there will come a time, soon we hope, when Israel and the Palestinian National Authority decide to resume their interrupted peace talks under one compromise formula or another. There is a consensus among all the parties, a return to war and violence is too costly even to consider. Neither Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu nor anybody else for that matter can successfully frustrate the dynamics of peace in the Middle East. That is why in fact the Netanyahu government needs to reconsider its priorities. For peace cannot be built or premised on the expansion of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, whose counsel is so important to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, has recently offered a face-saving formula that would call for the suspension of the housing project on Jabal Abu Ghneim for at least six months in order to allow the parties enough breathing space to conclude an agreement on the final status of the Palestinian territories. The Palestinian president was in Cairo Wednesday and it is possible that Mr. Mubarak persuaded him to accept such a compromise. There is every indication that Israel would also go along with the Egyptian proposition since it was floated before as a way out to end the impasse.

This is where the European role could be most helpful. In the absence of any direct U.S. participation in the efforts to end the stand-off, Europe could act to prod the parties into coming closer to a viable middle course.

As a matter of fact it was short-sighted in the first place to bypass Europe in the search for a negotiated settlement in the region. Europe has long argued that its role should not be confined to bankrolling the peace process. The resumption of its efforts in the search for a solution at this particular time is therefore welcome not only as a stopgap measure but also as a permanent complementary feature of all efforts to bring peace to this part of the world.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for **Al Aswaq** daily attacked the U.S. administration for criticising and threatening the Palestine leadership for passing a law against collaborators with Israel and agents that sell Palestinian land to the Jewish state. Rashid Hassan rejected such American behaviour as a flagrant interference in Palestine's internal affairs and in total disregard to the authority of the Palestinian state and its sovereignty over Palestinian lands. He said that the Palestine government has all the right to try and jail those who sell out their homeland to the Israelis and deprive the Palestinian people of their rights, just like any other nation which tries to protect its interests within its own boundaries. But the U.S. threats against the Palestinian authority's exercise of legitimate rights can only mean that Washington is not concerned with a Middle East, but rather with safeguarding Israel's interests at the expense of Palestinians who are being deprived of their properties and rights, said the writer. With this threat to the Palestinian leadership, the U.S. has exhibited its intent to help agents steal Arab lands and present them as a gift to the Israeli government and settlers, according to the writer who said that Washington continues to encourage Israel to pursue its occupation and settlement policies.

HAMMAM SAEED, a writer for the weekly **Al Majd**, questioned the wisdom of Jordan's holding on to the Wadi Araba peace treaty, saying that Israel is not keeping its promises and commitments under its provisions. The writer, who is also a member of Parliament representing the Islamic Action Front Party, said Jordan has not obtained the water share, as stipulated by the treaty, according to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali. The writer said the result was that the government raised the prices of water, making the Jordanians foot the bill. It was Dr. Majali who, upon the signing of the treaty with Israel, announced that Jordan has regained its water rights, and it is Dr. Majali again who recently declared that Jordan has not received a glass of the water it had been promised under the treaty, the writer pointed out. He said that Israel did not only default in the question of supplying Jordan with its share of water, it has also recently declared that it will retain its occupation of the whole length of the Jordan Valley, thus cancelling the provision in the treaty whereby it recognises Jordan's international boundaries.

The View from Academia

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

The nation's invisible philosophers

AT TIMES our society changes in ways which we sense and recognise; at times, it changes in ways which we do not. One profession which has been noticeably changing over the years is that of cab drivers. Not only has the number of taxis increased remarkably over the years, the types of people joining this profession have also become, in terms of background and qualifications, more varied and interesting.

During the past couple of weeks I used taxis extensively — 5-6 times a day on average. I met cab drivers of all sorts of backgrounds and qualifications: a schoolmaster who spent most of his time teaching in a Gulf country, a surveyor who spent most of his time in the desert, a recent university graduate, someone could not make it in the tawjihi, a failed businessman, a car dealer who spent most of his time in Germany, a retired army employee who spent ten years of his life in the U.S., a cab driver since as far as he could remember, and so on.

A mere look at this list shows the diversity of background of these interesting people. As most of the trips which I took averaged 20 to 30 minutes, there was ample time for us to exchange views on a variety of subjects — the conduct of people in our society, the state of the economy, the peace process, tourism, business ventures, political situation, life, etc.

The conversations, triggered by an occurrence on the road or a statement from the radio, often got autobiographical. The stories told by these taxi drivers, some of whom are taxi owners, are not only interesting but also instructive. Most of them (in my case) ended up telling the story of the career switch they made.

The teaching profession is different from that of cab driving, or is it? By the end of my conversation with the teacher, for example, we had reached the conclusion that the two professions were similar — in the challenges they pose and the rewards they imply — in ways which may not be obvious at first.

Such career switches tell us a great deal about the changing state of our society — and there is a great deal of research material here for the sociologist, the anthropologist, the political scientist, the economist, the journalist, the diplomat, etc.

Equally important is the astute perspective of these individuals on the state and status quo of our society. Cab drivers are observers of daily events, happenings and behaviour. They see with their own eyes what happens every second on the road (and one can tell a lot about us on the basis of our road behaviour) more than anyone else, and they listen to the radio more than anybody else (with the exception of housewives perhaps). They observe society at all hours — in the early morning, at noon, in the afternoon and in the dead of the night. They know the various parts of the cities as well as the villages (our cultures and subcultures).

Herman Melville, a literary author and philosopher best known as the author of "Moby-Dick," got most of his education and experience from his career as a sailor. Expressing the value of his sea experience, he said: "The sea is may Yale and Harvard."

For many of our taxi drivers, life on the road is their Yale and Harvard. They learn a lot from it and they have a lot to tell us about it. They are our invisible philosophers. We have nothing to lose if we lend them a sympathetic ear.

Iranian election — the earthquake might do the tilting

By G. H. Jansen

THE IRANIAN presidential election to be held on May 23 looks more like a democratic consultation than any so far held during the 18 years of the Islamic revolution.

All Iranians over the age of 15 are eligible to vote — women as well as men. Candidates representing parties are not allowed to stand although those standing clearly belong to clerical factions. The four contesting the election have been approved by an elderly group of overseers, called the Council of Guardians, all of whom are mullahs. All four candidates are mullahs. Among those presenting themselves to the council for approval were eight women who were all vetoed. Their elimination showed that the veto of the conservative-minded council can be applied in strict and sweeping fashion. Indeed, in the case of the last presidential poll in 1993, only three out of 100 hopefuls were approved.

Although this hotly contested competition is really between two figures, the present speaker of parliament, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, and a former minister of Islamic guidance, Mohammad Khatami, it is not easy to define their politics because the policies of their factions crisscross each other and, in the case of Khatami who is backed by two major groupings, contradict one another.

Nateq Nouri, a middle-level cleric backed by the conservative faction known as the Society of Combatant Clergy and endorsed by the Spiritual Guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, remains the favourite, but recently Khatami, who is supported by the more moderate clerical faction headed by the current President Hashemi Rafsanjani, obliged to vacate the office after two consecutive terms, and the left-leaning coalition of the Imam's line, has gained considerable support.

Nateq-Nouri, who enjoys the support of the "bazaaris," the merchants, favours free foreign trade but not foreign investment, takes a strongly anti-U.S. line and can command the support of a well-organised political machine which relies on the mosques to get out the vote. Anticipating the campaign which began on May 10, Nateq-Nouri toured the country — visiting schools, hospitals, factories and mosques — in an effort to win over voters before his rivals had won the approval of the Council of Guardians.

Khatami's backers profess contradictory policies on the economic and political planes but agree on cooperating against his rival. The coalition of the Imam's line supports state control of the economy and equalisation of wealth while the Rafsanjani faction opposes state control and favours foreign investment and rapprochement with the West. Khatami is popular amongst university students, intellectuals and educated women because he takes a more liberal attitude towards women's dress and employment than Nateq-Nouri.

The massive casualties and damage caused by the strong earthquake (7.1 on the Richter scale) which took place on the first official day of campaigning may have a serious impact on the poll result. It is expected that voters could express their views on the handling of the earthquake relief effort through the ballot box.

While Ayatollah Khamenei called upon the local religious authorities to assume responsibility for the relief effort, Rafsanjani appealed immediately for international aid to assist the thousands of victims of the quake. His action contrasted sharply with the delayed and tentative approach adopted by Tehran three years ago when there was a similarly devastating disaster. At that time many people died who could have been saved and the government came in for severe criticism. The competing clerical factions delayed issuing an appeal then because of the struggle for dominance being waged between the Rafsanjani moderates, prepared to elicit outside aid, and the conservative supporters of Khamenei, who insisted on self-reliance.

But today, notwithstanding the emphasis on differences of approach during the presidential election campaign, the line between the main factions has blurred and the needs of the victims of the latest disaster prevailed over revolutionary ideology. Positive proof of the erosion of ideology was the acquiescence of the conservatives in the recent decision of the oil ministry to offer international tenderers 11 projects for the development of the country's oil and gas reserves — something which would never have happened under the strict puritan rule of Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic revolution.

Following the latest earthquake, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian agencies received a prompt and adequate response to Tehran's urgent calls for relief. Both Washington, the main instigator of sanctions against Iran, and Bonn, alienated by the implication of the Iranian leadership in a political assassination in Germany, contributed to the relief effort. This could encourage the more liberal elements of Iranian society, particularly the intellectuals and students, to muster the vote for Mr. Khatami.

But if the "bazaaris," the mainstay of "Khomeinism," manage to elect their candidate, Nateq-Nouri, Iran's opening up to the West achieved by Rafsanjani over the six years since the liberation of Western hostages held by pro-Iranian Shiites in Lebanon could be slowed or postponed. If this happens, Iran's reconstruction, following its devastating eight year war with Iraq, and the development of its considerable oil and gas reserves will be starved for funds and delayed, at the expense of the long-suffering Iranian people, driving many into the camp of the hardline anti-Western mullahs and reinforcing the isolation thrust on the country by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's 1979 Islamic revolution.

LETTERS

No investment at any cost

To the Editor:

IT IS a shame that in the name of modernisation and attracting foreign investments, we have decided consciously and without scruples to pose a threat to our most treasured national natural reserves: Wadi Rum, Petra and now our underwater Red Sea natural reserve in Aqaba.

It is always a source of pride to boast about the underwater coral reefs, on southern coast of Aqaba, second to none except, perhaps, for the Great Barrier Reefs of Australia. But now, the Aqaba Regional Authority, which is responsible for the area, has decided to destroy our Red Sea treasure and deprive the coming generations of Jordanians of the joy of experiencing the once untainted underwater natural reserve.

Plans have been made to build eight five- and four-star hotels and a golf course right on the beach. Moreover, housing units for hundreds of inhabitants and two villages for several thousand inhabitants, to be placed behind these hotels, are also planned.

I have no problem with modernisation and I would like to see more investors come to Jordan. However, this should not be done at the expense of our environment. Decisions such as this are not to be taken by planners or foreign investors only. All Jordanians should have a say on issues that affect them and the coming generations.

It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that the environment is not destroyed.

The truth of the matter is that these hotels, the golf course, the housing units and the two villages that are expected to house 100,000 people are tantamount to a death warrant against the marine life in Aqaba. Very few people seem to care enough to do something about it before it is too late. Western countries have realised too late that when you damage the environment, it is very difficult to repair the damage. Why do we have to learn the hard way? Can we not learn from the mistakes of others?

Increasing the population on Aqaba's southern coast to the numbers projected will definitely cause physical damage to the coral reefs due to the hundreds of uncontrolled swimmers and divers.

Increasing the population will cause irreparable damage to the coral reefs and marine life due to the waste and trash that will be left by tourists, residents and visitors in that area. This waste and the sewage will undoubtedly cause extreme damage to the coral reefs and marine life. Moreover, it will cause poisoning of the marine life which could be easily transferred to people.

The recycled water, which is rich in nutrients, and the fertilisers which are going to be used to keep the grass of the golf course green under 40 degree temperatures are going to seep through the porous sandy beaches and cause algae to grow on the coral reefs, thus depriving them of the sun they need for their growth; understandably, this will result in their death. Moreover, the disturbance in the very sensitive ecosystem due to the foreign nutrients will disrupt the existing natural balance and negatively affect various types of marine species which will not be able to survive under drastically charged conditions.

I believe that an honest, impartial assessment of the impact of the project on the surrounding environment should be conducted before any plans are approved.

An independent, unbiased committee, made up of Jordanian representatives of non-governmental environmental institutions, to oversee all phases of proposed development near natural reserves and environmentally sensitive areas should be set up.

International standards related to environmental protection should be followed.

Foreign investment should be used for tourist projects in areas where the least environmental damage can be caused.

The infrastructure needed to protect the environment has to be studied and made available before any project is allowed to operate.

If authorities responsible for the project decide to carry on with it without taking into account the environmental damage that will be caused if existing plans are implemented, they will have proved that they are not acting in the national interest of Jordan and Jordanians.

Aida Dabbas,
Amman.

1,000 years of events

To the Editor:

I HAVE read, needless to say, with much interest Rami G. Khouri's column "Empires and umpires" (Jordan Times, May 20, 1997). Dutifully or not, his review "of the last 2000 years" must have been indeed done in a hurry.

Mr. Khouri's observations and, every now and then, witty conceptions are already well-known and we grew fond of them.

I will leave the issue of the "historic impact" and significance, as well as the postulated consequences, of the move of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team from New York City to Los Angeles in 1957 to more knowledgeable and competent minds.

What I intend to comment on is the handling of M. Walzer's basic political arrangement of history: multinational empires. Here I believe Mr. Khouri had not had enough time to review and analyse the impact of the process of disintegration and subsequent demise of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire "across the river" of the Ottoman Empire and its collapsing at almost exactly the same time. A look at the immeasurable human tragedies and the threatening political instability in Walzer's virtual "national states" in the Balkand should be enough to illustrate, "a truly historic event on a global scale."

By the way, Austria is just now celebrating its own millennium. Not a bad run for most of that piece of history.

Dr. Salah Salah,
Amman.

Water strategy needed

To the Editor:

I WAS impressed with Prof. Gunter Berger's feelings towards Jordan and the Jordanians, expressed in his letter "Precious people, cheap water" (Jordan Times, May 12, 1997). I am sure that he has discovered in our country much more than he expected in terms of history, culture or hospitality, in addition to its natural beauty and the many civilisations that have spread throughout the Kingdom in the course of history.

I agree with Prof. Berger that there is carelessness in handling water in Jordan, especially when it is known that water shortage is a problem that we all have to face and handle. There will be an increase demand on water supply due to the rise of the Jordan's population, which is expected to reach 7.3 million by the year 2010, but hopefully, Jordan will regain its rightful share of water from Israel through a comprehensive peace settlement.

I believe that it is not too late to reduce water consumption and to increase the supply by taking some measures such as: replacing the damaged water network in the Kingdom; encouraging citizens to build underground reservoirs to collect rain water; harvesting water, which should become a strategy, not only a policy; protecting water resources from pollution; preventing unlicensed pumping and punishing those who will not abide by the government regulations; using treated water for irrigation; establishing regional cooperation regarding water issues, as an essential element for stability and peace; raising public awareness, especially among the young generation, to the importance of water and the need to judiciously use it; adding a course on "protecting the environment" to the educational curricula at schools and universities.

Taroub Jamal Bedour,
Ministry of Culture and Youth,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Society on the Move

Where loyalties lie

By now those who follow the movement of press personalities may find the pace of all the individual ricocheting between publications somewhat dizzying. Take for instance two leading, sometimes controversial, columnists Tareq Masarweh and Fahed Fanek. It was common knowledge that Mr. Masarweh, who had been temporarily suspended from writing his regular column in Al Rai Arabic daily, was to steer the new daily, Al Arab Al Yawm, as its chief editor. But when the paper made its debut on Saturday, the name Tareq Masarweh was missing from the editorial bill. Four days later, Mr. Masarweh's former column reappeared in Al Rai. And further still, instead of showing on the back page, the column surfaced on the paper's front page. Reasons for the 'change of heart'? Some say it was Mr. Masarweh's unsuccessful bid with Al Arab Al Yawm publisher Riyad Horoub to postpone the launch of the paper. Mr. Masarweh felt the organisation was not logistically prepared to properly 'roll the presses.' Thus his short-lived tenure at the top of that editorial ladder. Whatever the circumstances, Mr. Masarweh is back at his desk at Al Rai .

As for economist Dr. Fanek, the non-appearance of his daily column in Al Rai on Saturday, and his prominently displayed column in Arab Al Yawm's first issue on the same day caused media watchers to say "Uh-oh." But, Dr. Fanek, who was made a good offer, maintains that after he had accepted to write for the new daily, then left for a visit to London, he did some considerable "soul-searching." His conclusion — he was uncomfortable with shifting to another paper after 20 solid years with Al Rai. "I have history behind me, and it is not easy to go simply for any other incentives."

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ATTENTION OFFICERS: *During this past week there was a slew of sudden retirements and staff changes in the upper ranks of the Public Security Department (PSD). Those who were retired were: Major Generals Sharif Ali Abu Issam, director of the Juvenile and Rehabilitation Centres, Abdul Khader Oran, director of the Diwan, Adel Armouti, head of the Investigation Department, and Brig. Mohammad Saleh Zoubi, who was director of the Maintenance Department. It was reported that retired Major General Mohammad Tarazi was to be brought back to the PSD to become an assistant to PSD Director Nasouh Moheiddin. The senior officer was once head of the Traffic Department. He is now serving as governor of Balqa with headquarters in Salt. Moving to some of the positions vacated by the above-mentioned retirements and thus promoted are Colonels Abdul Rahman Sharif of the Amman Police Department who became director of the Investigation Department, Suleiman Ibrahim Jaber of the Diwan who became acting director of the Maintenance Department, Mijhem Faouri of the Investigation Department who became director of the Diwan, Daher Khattar of the Juvenile and Rehabilitation Centres who became acting director of Bridges, Fawaz Mohammad Zuheir of the Mafraq Police Department who became head of the Juvenile and Rehabilitation Centres and Musa Mohammad Faleh of the Bridges Station who became director of the Mafraq Police Department.*

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BUSINESS AS USUAL: *Although negotiations between representatives of leftist parties and a handful of independent prominent citizens to form a moderate leftist bloc ahead of the next parliamentary elections are still in progress, one party to the negotiations is still planning to hold its annual general conference. Under the leadership of Suleiman Arar, a former deputy Prime Minister, former speaker of the Lower House of Parliament and once chief editor of Al Rai, Al Mustaqbal (The Future), a pan-Arabist party, will convene its conference on Saturday at the Philadelphia Hotel. The party was established four years ago. The proposed alliance of this new bloc involves names such as former Prime Ministers Ahmad Obeidat and Taher Masri, as well as labour and professional unions.*

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FLYING FOR HEALTH: *Getting together for the another cause — the support of treatment for cancer patients — are the Anglo-Jordanian Society, under the patronage of Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath and Great Britain's Duke and Duchess of Kent, and the team at the Al Amal Centre. Two British pilots, Dr. Nigel Capps and Alex Zomoya will fly to Jordan from England in a single engine aircraft, making 10 stops in five countries, to raise funds for cancer treatment for patients of Al Amal Centre. A 20-person delegation from the Anglo-Jordanian Society in the U.K. will arrive in Amman Sunday to attend a reception organised by Royal Wings, under the patronage of Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal Bin Al Hussein and Princess Alia Faisal, to celebrate the arrival of the two pilots. The event is scheduled to take place at Marka Airport on Wednesday, May 28 at 2:30 p.m. The pilots and the society will be honoured at another ceremony hosted by Al Amal Centre in appreciation of the visitors' endeavours. Other plans of the Anglo-Jordanian Society in this field include a mountain bike tour through Jordan, again to raise needed funds to help cancer patients.*

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EARTHY WORK: *At the annual general assembly meeting of the Jordan River for Development Projects (JRDP), the NGO's president, HRH Princess Rania Abdullah, announced that for anyone interested in social development, the organisation's doors were open to working or affiliate membership. Established in December 1995, JRDP seeks to improve the quality of life of the underprivileged through income-generating projects. Some of its plans include working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on a child abuse prevention project and establishing a home furnishings and accessories cottage industry with the women of Wadi Yabis near the northern Jordan Valley utilising agricultural waste such as bamboo, straw and banana leaf.*

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FAMILIAR GROUNDS: *Andrew Robinson, a former Canadian ambassador to Jordan, was in the Kingdom in his capacity as Canadian special coordinator for the Middle East peace process for a one-day check up on the refugee camps in the country. Mr. Robinson regularly visits the region to consult with principals as part of his responsibilities to the peace process' working group on refugees which is chaired by Canada. His high-level meetings here were topped by reviewing the refugee situation with HRH Crown Prince Hassan. Mr. Robinson headed for Beirut from Amman.*

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10 YEARS LATER: *Another former ambassador to the Kingdom expected in Amman sometime in the near future is Emilio Menendez del Valle. Mr. Del Valle, who served in Amman from 1983 to 1987, will become the representative of the humanitarian agency of the European Union for the Middle East, known as ECHO. What has not yet been determined is whether Mr. Del Valle will be based in Amman or Beirut. But if it's Amman he is certain to rekindle many old friendships.*

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JORDAN MANIA IN THE MEDIA: *Here from France are two separate media groups with similar interests in bringing Jordan's rich features to their audiences and readers back home. Arrived Saturday and leaving today were seven journalists from diverse publications, on a quick tour of the Kingdom's archaeological treasures ahead of the launching of an archaeology exhibition on Jordan at l'Institut du Monde Arube in Paris. The exhibition is part of France's presentation of the Jordan Season in the republic. It is hoped that French President Jacques Chirac will be joined by His Majesty King Hussein in inaugurating the exhibition in mid-June. But the King's plans to travel to Europe next month are still tentative. The visiting journalists were from Paris-Match, RTL, Valeur Actuelles, La Vie, Connaissance des Arts, Ça M'interresse, Le Temps Retrouvé and Arts & the Islamic World. Also here from Paris were France 2 Television editor in chief Gérard Sebag and producer Michel Perrier. Their team of light, camera and sound technicians will be producing a 15-minute programme on Jordan to be featured on the popular morning show called "Les Beaux Matins," also in mid-June. For both media teams, French Ambassador Bernard Bajolet hosts receptions at his residence.*

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TRYING ANOTHER STYLE: *On the local media front, with its usual and not so usual upheavals, we can report that although Jordan Television is losing a presenter, the J.T. is gaining a reporter. Mariana Far of JTV's 8'o'clock Arabic news programme has opted to try her hand at writing for a daily after a trial with the television station's experimentation into new formats and styles of news reporting. Ms. Far, who has also been a correspondent for World News Link, a features agency, helped to pave the way at JTV with a new brand of news presenting. Ms. Far's is expected to be one among several other names joining the J.T. team in the next few months. No premature announcements here, however. We will have to wait for the new-old journalists to produce some work first.*

THEIR EYES ON THE BALL: *It seems Jordanian student athletes abroad keep catching the attention of their university papers. This time Davis Cup contender Wadie Kawar and basketball forward Zaid Alkhas were featured in the State University of New York at Buffalo's campus magazine. There's is a 'small world' story. Wadie was a senior when he first met his countryman Zaid, then a freshman. The two athletes had certainly heard and read of each other while in Jordan, but it took the university's annual kick-off celebration of its basketball season to bring them together. Wadie was in the stands when he heard 3,000 fans roar in applause as Zaid was introduced as a Bulls team forward. That was the start of a mutually supportive friendship.*

Wadie Kawar

Zaid Alkhas

The young men are still pursuing their degrees. Wadie, the son of Issa and Hind Kawar, is doing graduate studies in environmental engineering, and Zaid, the son of Naim and Shweikar Alkhas, is continuing towards a bachelors.

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HITCHED ON THE WEST COAST: *If you haven't already heard, don't feel left out; it came as somewhat of a surprise even for us here at the Jordan Times. Our editor in chief, George Hawatmeh, has at long last entered the bonds of holy matrimony, taking as his bride Christina Zacharia of Santa Monica, California. The couple met last year while Christina, the daughter of Bassem and Pat Zacharia, was conducting research in the West Bank for her Ph.D. thesis. They were married on May 8 in San Luis Obispo, a few miles away from their honeymoon spot of Cambria, on the California coast.*

Jennifer Hamarneh

Sound Of Music makes Austrian cash tills ring

By Elizabeth Fullerton
Reuter

SALZBURG, Austria (R) — The hills are alive with the sound of tour buses as the Hollywood classic The Sound Of Music" proves to be one of the Austrian tourist industry's biggest moneyspinners, rivalling even Mozart for popularity.

The 1965 film of the Austrian novice Maria who leaves a convent and sings her way into the hearts of Baron Von Trapp and his seven children evokes equal measures of nausea and delight each time it gets an airing.

But the saccharine Cinderella romance has spawned a booming tourist industry of its own worth around 26.5 million schillings ($2.2 million) a year in the Von Trapp homeland.

Three rival Austrian companies, set up shortly after the film's release, jostle for the business of some 80,000 fans who flock to the Alpine city of Salzburg every year just to go on a Sound Of Music tour.

"People come back again and again. Sometimes they bring their children or friends, sometimes they come on their honeymoon," Johannes Herzl, co-owner of Panorama Tours which claims to offer the oldest Sound Of Music tour, told Reuters.

While most Austrians have never even seen the film set in Salzburg and the Alps, devotees mainly from the United States, Japan and South America literally sing their way around the locations where the film was shot.

In peak season, firms send up to eight coaches, or 400 people, daily on the four-hour tour at 330 schillings a ticket.

The real Von Trapp story

Behind all the hype is the story of the real Von Trapp family, which was forced to flee after the invasion of Austria in 1938 by Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler when Georg Von Trapp refused to accept a post in Hitler's government.

The schmaltzy Hollywood version departs from reality in a number of details, such as the sabotage by friendly nuns of the car used by the Nazis to pursue the family.

In the film the family nips over the border from Salzburg to Switzerland. The real Von Trapps left home carrying backpacks ostensibly for a hiking expedition and escaped by train to the Adriatic port of Trieste, from where they made their way to the United States.

There they launched themselves as the Von Trapp singers but never received a penny of the proceeds from the multi-million dollar Hollywood hit, which won five Oscars and sold more tickets than Gone With The Wind.

They sold the rights of their story for a meagre $10,000 to a German film company that made the little known first version in 1956 called The Von Trapp Family.

It was dwarfed by the U.S. version, produced by Twentieth Century Fox, with British actress Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer and songs by songwriting duo Rodgers and Hammerstein.

A few of tourists' favourite things on the tour

The Gazebo, where Liesl, the eldest Von Trapp daughter, and her film boyfriend Rolf meet secretly and perform the showstopper I Am 16 Going On 17, is one of the highlights of the tour.

"We have had quite a few people propose in front of the Gazebo," Mr. Herzl of Panorama Tours said.

Another favourite stop is the Baroque lakeside Leopoldskron Palace, which was used as the back of the Von Trapp mansion. In one scene the children and Maria plunge into the lake from their boat in excitement at seeing the baron.

"We had people get so excited when they saw the palace that they rushed across the lake when it was frozen and fell through. That was very dramatic," said one Panorama Tour guide.

The tours are so popular that companies have had to develop special tours in Japanese and Spanish, among others, to cater for the tourists who do not speak English.

"It's more popular than any other tour we offer, including that of the city," said Walter Stugger, who runs Salzburg sightseeing tours. He estimates 90 per cent of Americans who visit the city — also Mozart's birthplace and home to a major annual music festival — go on the tour.

Tour firms say couples often use the music from the film at their weddings held at tourist sites around the city.

Sound Of Music fans are fans for life

One woman from Canada said her husband nearly changed his career to music as a result of the film. "The film came out just after we were engaged and it had such an impact that we wanted to live it for real 30 years later," she said.

The different tours vary little, including the gazebo, Leopoldskron Palace, the church where Maria and the Baron were married, and views of the Nonnberg Abbey, where Maria was a novice. Naturally, tour participants are treated to highlights of the Sound Of Music soundtrack during the ride.

The tour also takes in the Alpine scenery around Salzburg featured in the famous opening shots of the film where Maria appears over a hilltop and sings The Hills Are Alive With The Sound Of Music.

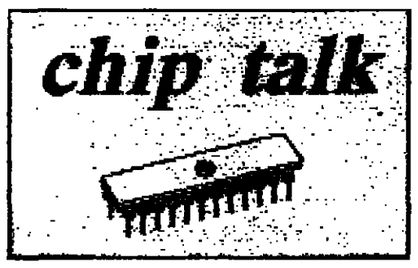
Tour manager Stugger said that eager fans will sometimes leap out of the coach to give their own rendition of the song.

"There are unbelievable scenes. People laughing, crying, and singing. Everything is imaginable on the bus because the people get very emotional."

The real Von Trapp family which was forced to flee after the invasion of Austria in 1938 by Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler, is shown in an undated file photograph. The story of the family is told in the 1965 Hollywood classic The Sound Of Music. The film has spawned a booming tourist industry of its own worth around $2.2 million a year in the Von Trapp homeland in Austria's Salzburg province (Reuter photo)

Nothing of a surprise

By Jean-Claude Elias



THIS TIME the computer has won. Deep Blue, IBM's custom-built computer, has defeated the greatest chess master of them all, Gary Kasparov. There have been enough comparisons, comments and technical explanations in the media. My intent here is not to add to them or paraphrase overused flamboyant, catchy statement.

What I do find remarkable however is the relatively short time elapsed between Kasparov defeating the computer in February 1996 and Deep Blue's victory this month. In this very Chip Talk column, exactly on 7 March 1996, I wrote, "It is only normal to imagine that programmers at IBM, or Microsoft, or Cray, etc., will be able one day to design software that could beat any grand master. Still, it won't prove that machine is taking over our planet..." I can't hide that I'm proud to have foreseen what happened this month although, in all honesty, I didn't really expect it to happen so soon. I was thinking more of five or ten years maybe.

What is also interesting is the change of attitude in the media. Last year, the press release announced: "Man triumphs over machine in historic chess contest." This year, the very first sentence one finds in the Web site (on Internet) dedicated to Deep Blue, reads: "This match is not about competition between people and machines. It is a demonstration of what makes us human beings so different from computers." What a radical change — in a little more than a year!

From Kasparov's end there also seems to be a change of attitude. In his after-match comments this month he said that one possible reason for his defeat was to have treated his opponent as a machine, while he should have thought of it more like a human being. Such a statement, far from being absurd, may be the key to the question. When Kasparov, or any other chess master plays a machine, he is actually fighting against the team of analysts and programmers who designed and made it. Now Kasparov is rethinking a new strategy and there are already rumours of the next match. Don't be astonished if it took place in just a month or two.

As far as I am concerned I have no more "predictions" in store and no event related to computer development, however extraordinary it may be, could surprise me anymore.

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, May 22, 1997

3:30	The Holy Koran
3:35	French Programmes
4:00	NBA
5:00	Out Of This World
6:00	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	French Programme
7:30	News headlines
7:35	Parenthood
8:30	The American Chart Show
9:10	Kung Fu — The Legend Continues
10:00	News In English
10:30	Feature Film — Driving Miss Daisy Starring: Morgan Freeman & Jessica Tandy
12:00	Taratata

Friday, May 23, 1997

3:00	The Holy Koran
3:05	Leo The Lion — Cartoon
3:35	Wish Bone
4:00	Winners Down Under
4:50	High Tech-Culture (Doc.)
5:15	Glorious Gardens
6:00	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	French Programme
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	America's Funniest Home Videos
8:00	The Health Show
8:30	Hawkeye
9:10	500 Nations
10:00	News In English
10:30	Mini Series — Voice Of The Heart
12:00	Ellen — Comedy

Saturday, May 24, 1997

3:30	The Holy Koran
3:35	French Programmes
4:00	Gillette (Sports)
4:30	Innovation (Doc.)
4:50	Tilt 23.5
5:15	Blue Heelers
6:00	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	French Programme
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Hanging with Mr. Cooper
8:00	Feature Film — Kindergarden Cop
10:00	News In English
10:30	The Annual People's Awards
11:15	Feature Film — Back To the Future III

Sunday, May 25, 1997

12:00	The Holy Koran
12:05	French Cartoon
1:00	The World's Greatest Magic Show
3:00	Pop Variety Show
5:00	Comedy (Step by Step)
5:30	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	French Programme
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air
8:00	On The Banks Of Jordan
8:30	Side Effects
8:50	H.M. King Hussein (Newspapers clips... on achievements)
9:00	Special Programme — With Dr. Ahmad Majdoubeh
10:00	News In English
10:35	Movie — Post Cards From the Edge
12:00	Music Show — Julio Iglesias & Placido Domingo

Monday, May 26, 1997

3:30	The Holy Koran
3:35	French Programme
4:00	The German Scene (Documentary)
4:25	Deep Water Haven
4:50	The Ocean Girl
5:15	Extra Dimensions
6:00	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	French Programme
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	One foot in The Grave
8:00	Secrets Of Science
8:30	Murder She Wrote
9:10	Highlander (Drama)
10:00	News In English
10:30	The Write Verdict
11:15	The Cinder Path

Tuesday, May 27, 1997

3:30	Holy Koran
3:35	French Cartoon
4:00	Super Sport Follies
4:30	Dog House (Children Drama)
5:10	The Album Show
6:00	French Programmes
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Coach
8:00	Tilt 23.5
8:30	Encounter (Local Talk Show)
9:10	Nature Of Things (Documentary)
10:00	News In English
10:30	Snowy River
11:15	Mission Impossible

Wednesday, May 28, 1997

3:30	Holy Koran
3:35	French Cartoon
4:00	America's Funniest People
4:30	Spell Binder
4:50	Forests Of The World (Doc.)
5:30	Bordertown
6:00	French Programmes
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Grace Under Fire (Doc.)
8:00	World War II (Documentary)
8:30	Challenges
9:10	Spenser For Hire
10:00	News In English
10:25	Cobra
11:15	Hart To Hart

Out with the old, in with the new

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

SPRING IS a time of renewal and rejuvenation. It is a time of hope. It is a time of change. It is a time for clearing out those items we own that we think we can no longer use. Moreover, it can be a time of fluctuating weather conditions that can sometimes get quite freaky.

Getting into this spirit of spring, and because I am an ardent fan of clearing up those items that have outlived their usefulness, I had decided to ignore the urge to go out on the rally trail to check out the racing cars in favour of staying home to get on with some long-planned spring cleaning.

Along with public perceptions, I had decided that spring had actually arrived, and that we have just had whatever bout of wintry weather we were bound to have for the coming few months.

Clearing up always brings out the best in me. For some reason I do like to throw things out, or give them over to my favourite charity of the time. I tend to be quite tough once I decide that the things that have used up their usefulness need to be cleared out. For me, there can be no holding back: If it has to go, then it has to go. If it is either damaged or broken, it too has to go.

But, not only do I do that, I can also throw out those items that I had not used in the 12 months prior to the dumping decree. I believe in the efficient use of space.

These habits may have something to do with the desire to get on in life with less things to worry about. It may have something to do with being a part of the modern world. You know how we are constantly being told that we live in a modern world characterised by speed and mobility. And mobility implies travelling light, which in itself means owning very little, doesn't it?

On second thought, I do tend to replace those old items with new ones as soon as I get a chance to do so. So, maybe, I am not a part of the modern world after all.

My spring clearing fever included getting the flat's windows cleaned up after the previous day's sudden storms and outbursts of rain. Outbursts whose accompanying lightning storms had claimed the life of a relative of mine down in the city of Karak.

According to what I have heard, the lightning had struck him while he was standing outside his front door in the fields overlooking the city.

I wonder if he had just been through his own cleaning up campaign. If he had gone out of his house to get some fresh air after an exhausting day, what good would have spring cleaning done for him?

Maybe we should all leave a mess of things so that those who are left behind can go through the motions of sorting out the piles of messed up gadgets.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Mohammad A. Shuqair

HAPPY DREAMS

• **ACADEMY** — Any dream involving this type of institution promises new friends and experiences, but it also warns that these may lead to costly speculation. Be cautious.

• **FOOTBALL** — If you dreamt of playing football, a money windfall of some kind should soon come your way. Could be a lucky gamble, an expected bonus, extra dividends, or even a legacy, but whatever it is it will be an interesting size. A dream of watching a football game is a warning to be more selective in making new friends.

• **DISGRACE** — This dream pertains strictly to love and/or domestic affairs and is a most favourable omen whether it involved your own disgrace or that of others.

* * * *

PUZZLES

(A) SANTA'S TRIP

The initial letters of the small pictures will name three places Santa is visiting. What are they?

* * *

(B) FILLING THE TIME

AN AMERICAN whose car had broken down found himself stranded in a small village from which no train was due to depart for 2 3/4 hours.

It was a beautiful day, and, wishing to see the countryside, he took advantage of an offer by the local carrier to take him for a ride. The carrier explained that he would not be coming back to the station that day, which meant, of course, that the American would have to leave the cart at a certain point and walk back to the station in time to catch his train.

The cart travelled at the rate of 8 miles an hour, and the American walked back at the rate of 3 miles an hour.

How far out was he when he left the cart to walk back to the station??

* * * *

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Whence do we get the expression "to knuckle under"
2. What is the length of a knot?
3. Who were the Vikings?
4. How much blood is there in an ordinary man's body?
5. Which planet has a big red spot on its surface?
6. What is Dr. Sigmund Freud's nationality?
7. Who used to steal from the rich to give to the poor?
8. The number of Muslims in Afghanistan is more than that in India. Is this true or fale?

* * * *

JOKES

• SERVANT (to her ill-looking lady): "There's a woman at the door who wants to see you."

"A woman? Is she pretty and graceful?"

"No, my lady. She's just like you."

* * *

• A WOMAN talking reproachfully to her friend widow: "Good Heavens! What's that? How dare you play the piano and less than a week has elapsed since your husband died?"

"Calm down, calm down my dear friend. I play on the black keys only!"

* * *

• A PATIENT visited a doctor complaining of much forgetfulness. The physician prescribed him some tablets and asked him to come back next week for consultation.

After a week, the patient came back.

"Well, has your memory got better? said the doctor.

"To some extent, but I always forget to take the tablets and I want you to prescribe other tablets that would remind me of the former ones!"

* * *

• ADDRESSING a young man who came to ask his daughter's hand:

FATHER: "Have you got enough money to set up a home?

YOUNG MAN: "That depends on the amount of money you'll give us, sir!"

* * * *

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** Take my word for it.
Saddiqni feema aqool.

** A word to the wise is sufficient.
Al-labib minal isharah yaf'ham.

** He went all over the world.
Tafa hawl ad-donia.

** Come what will.
Leyahsul ma yahsul.

** Don't use hasty words.
La tanfa'el fil-kalam.

** All is well. Praise be to God.
Koll shay ala ma yuran. Al-hamd lil-lah.

** She is in the family way.
Jeya hobla.

** Let him have his own way.
Da'hu yaf'al ma yurreed.

** Let that be a warning to you.
Leyakon thalek ibratan laka.

** It is low water with me.
Ana fee daa'iqa maaliyah.

** He waived his rights.
Tnaazal an huquqehi.

** It is all up.
Intaha al-amr.

Cannes raps censorship with festival awards

CANNES, France (R) — Two of the directors honoured with the 50th Cannes Film Festival's leading awards Sunday have fought a common cause against censorship.

Veteran Egyptian Yousef Chahine, awarded a special anniversary prize for his career as a whole, had his last-but-one movie, The Migrant, banned following pressure from Muslim fundamentalists in his homeland.

Iran's Abbas Kiarostami, who shared the Golden Palm Award for best film with Japan's Shohei Imamura, was initially told by Tehran he would not be allowed to enter The Taste Of The Cherry in this year's Cannes Film Festival.

At the start of the festival, jury President Isabelle Adjani had denounced pressure by Iran and China, which banned directors Zhang Yimou and Zhang Yuan from Cannes.

At the winners' news conference following the prize-giving ceremony, the 72-year-old Chahine swiftly used his award to make a plea to censors the world over.

Asked about the political problems that have dogged his work, he answered: "Filmmakers are not loved by governments. Instead of trying to stifle us they should give us more room to breathe."

Chahine, whose ode to tolerance Destiny was screened in Cannes, labelled his prize "A Hope For Future Generations" of filmmakers.

Kiarostami, 52, was more tight-lipped, saying only: "I'm very happy, I can't believe it." His meditation on suicide and the Muslim religion features the Iranian army in the form of a naive young soldier who refuses to help a man kill himself. "The military represent youth, life and energy," he said.

The director had last month quoted the Culture Ministry as telling him that Tehran would ban him from Cannes because the film should first be shown at the Fajr (Dawn) Festival in Tehran which marks the Islamic Revolution every February.

Industry sources said Kiarostami was finally given the green light following intervention by the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

In Cannes-featured Destiny, Chahine chronicles the trials of 12th century philosopher Averroes who lived in Muslim Spain.

A French-Egyptian co-production shot in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and France, it mirrors Chahine's ordeal as Averroes' books were ordered to be burned after a protest by fundamentalists.

"Through the philosopher's story, my film urges tolerance. If it existed in Andalusia in the golden age of Islam, why not today?" Chahine said earlier in Cannes.

Asked about the parallels with his own career, he answered: "When I was threatened, people wanted to impose bodyguards on me. I refused and instead of locking myself up, I went out into the street. I was safe there, because the man in the street has always understood me better than the authorities."

The Migrant was banned after fundamentalists said it resembled the story of the Patriarch Joseph, in violation of the Orthodox Islamic view that it is not permitted to portray characters whom Muslims consider prophets.

Chahine's lawyers argued the plot of the film, seen by at least two million people before it was banned in September 1995, differed from the story of Joseph as it appears in the Koran and so the question of depicting a prophet did not arise.

Egyptian director Yousef Chahine (centre) stands between actress Laila Eloui (right) and actor Nour Al Sherif during a photo call for their film Al Massir. Chahine's film was screened in competition for the Palme d'Or at the 50th Cannes Film Festival (Reuter photo)

Will 'Jurassic Park' sequel be a monster hit too?

By Steve James
Reuter

HOLLYWOOD — Steven Spielberg's challenge was how to follow up the biggest-grossing movie of all time.

His answer was more, more, more.

The Lost World, the sequel to the blockbuster Jurassic Park which grossed almost $1 billion worldwide, opens May 23, featuring more robotic dinosaurs biting more people's heads off and stomping on more cars in the streets of San Diego — all the time evoking more sympathy for those lovable pre-historic carnivores.

However, according to Hollywood insiders, a sequel may not necessarily be an automatic box-office or critical success.

"Some sequels fail miserably. some are better," said John Krier, of Exhibitors Relations Co. Inc., which logs and analyses film box-office figures.

"There's really no pattern and it can be a gamble," he said, "(for example) 'Die Hard II' was bigger than the first."

Some sequels, such as Godfather II or the Back To The Future, Superman and Batman series have done well, but other attempts to duplicate a film's success have bombed.

For example, The Evening Star, a sequel to the 1983 Oscar-winning Terms Of Endearment, with Jack Nicholson and Shirley MacLaine reprising their roles, disappeared without a trace earlier this year.

And how many moviegoers remember Jeff Bridges and Timothy Bottoms returning 20 years later in a sequel to Peter Bogdanovich's 1971 classic The Last Picture Show? It was called Texasville if you missed it.

Chance to do it again

For Spielberg, "The Lost World" is his chance to make a sequel, having been denied the opportunity to direct the follow-up to his own breakthrough film, Jaws, when the studio, Universal, farmed it out to so another director.

This time, Universal kept faith with Spielberg.

The 1993 Jurassic Park told how genetically engineered dinosaurs, recreated from DNA encased in amber, terrorised scientists at a theme park on an island off Costa Rica.

The sequel, which again stars Jeff Goldblum and Sir Richard Attenborough, along with Julianne Moore and Vince Vaughn, shifts the action to a nearby island where dinosaurs have been allowed to breed and live free.

In an obvious homage to King Kong and the Godzilla monster movies, the climax occurs when a giant tyrannosaurus rex gets lose in San Diego and goes on a rampage.

The film contains remarkable special effects involving nine different species of dinosaurs (compared to five in the original film) and nine-tonne Tyrannosaurus Rex (T-Rex) robots.

The challenge, said David Koepp, who wrote both screenplays based on novels by Michael Crichton, was to produce a sequel rather than a limp remake.

"The first movie was so popular that film-makers and audiences all had ideas about what should be in the sequel. Everyone felt proprietary about it," he said.

Kathleen Kennedy, executive producer and a founding partner in Spielberg's company Amblin Entertainment, agreed:

"The key difference was the novelty of not having to show the audience about dinosaurs. (Rather) how to create a story as compelling — with aspects of the first, but new events.

Actors (left to right) Jeff Goldblum, Vince Vaughn and Julianne Moore are shown in a scene from the new film The Lost World: Jurassic Park in which they come face to face with a T-Rex dinosaur (Reuter photo)

Dinosaur family values

"What works in the second film is that you feel it is grounded in the animals," she said, alluding to the constant theme in "The Lost World" that even flesh-eating T Rex cares about his family.

True to Spielberg's renowned parsimony, the sequel cost only about $15 million more to make than the first — $75 million compared to $59.6 million, said Ms. Kennedy.

As Spielberg told Time Magazine, the technology that brought digitalised dinos to the screen in "Jurassic Park" has not advanced considerably since. But the artistry of the creative people has to the extent that the latest dinosaurs look and move more realistically than in "Jurassic Park."

Stan Winston, who supervised the construction of the live-action dinosaurs, said it is a challenge to come up to audiences' expectations.

"My worry is that the audience expects it all to look real. Audiences welcomed King Kong, with the technology they had then. Tomorrow audiences will expect more ... and they should."

Goldblum, too, was conscious that audiences will look at "The Lost World" with an eye to what came before.

"Knowing that so many people got such a kick out of the first one, there is the thinking that this must exceed their expectations."

And if it is a hit, will there be a "Jurassic Park III"?

"We have not even talked about it, and we're suspicious. You don't want to," said Ms. Kennedy.

"You know the studio will come round at some time and ask for a sequel. But I don't know of Steven wants to make a career of Jurassic Park," she said.

Actors (left to right) Jeff Goldblum, Richard Schiff and Vince Vaughn are shown in a scene from the new film The Lost World: Jurassic Park in which they come dangerously close to a herd of stegosaurs. The dinosaurs in the film are created by computer graphics (Reuter photo)

First Singapore film-maker heads for Cannes

By Doreen Siow
Reuter

SINGAPORE — Local film-maker Eric Khoo, who put tiny Singapore on the world film-map, is heading for Cannes hoping he can turn his invitation into commercial success.

Khoo's second feature film, 12 Storeys, has hit the jackpot with an invite to take part in the non-competitive category of the 50th Cannes International Film Festival from May 7-19.

It will be the first Singapore-made film to be screened at Cannes, the most prestigious international film festival.

For Khoo, 32, the invitation is an "incredible milestone" in his years of trudging the international film festival circuit.

"The invite has put me on a complete mental high. It is still sinking in as Cannes is the most important festival," Khoo told Reuters in an interview.

Khoo first hit the festival circuit seven years ago with a short film called Barbie Digs Joe shown in Hawaii.

Since then, he produced a short film almost every year until in 1995 when he made his first feature, "Mee Pok Man," a story about a slow-witted Singaporean noodle-seller who falls for a prostitute.

Mee Pok Man has been shown at nearly 40 festivals. "In the film community, they do know Singapore as a centre for making films now," Khoo said.

A one-man film industry

And the credit rests solely on Khoo.

"Khoo is Singapore's one-man film industry's greatest success story. He has a body of work which sets him apart from other local film-makers — the others just make one-off features," local film critic Whang Yee Ling said.

Mr. Whang said Khoo's success stemmed from two main factors — formal training in film-making in Sydney and a knack for plugging into the Singapore scene for his films.

Khoo's 12 Storeys is about life in the tiny city-state's ubiquitious public housing estates.

"He has had a lot of exposure to films. He has a certain style and also technical finesse. You can tell it is an Eric Khoo film," Mr. Whang said.

Detractors say Khoo's success probably has something to do with the fact that he is the youngest son of hotel billionaire Khoo Teck Puat.

"He has no problems with finding financial backers and distributors for his films," said one critic, who declined to be identified.

Khoo, whose full-time job is looking after his father's flagship Goodwood Hotel, said his feature films had not received any family money. "It was my track record as a film-maker over the years that has attracted outside financial backers."

"My father has never offered to finance my films. I think when you invest in films, which is a very risky investment, you have to believe in the films, you have to love films," he said.

12 Storeys, which cost 300,000 Singapore dollars ($200,000) to produce, was bankrolled by Brink Creative and Springroll Entertainment, two local entertainment and promotion companies which approached him after his success with Mee Pok Man.

Khoo said his greatest family supporter and fan is sister Jacqueline, a banker by training who also doubled as financial controller and producer of his last two feature films.

Cannes could answer distribution problem

Khoo said he faced the same distribution hurdles as other relatively unknown film-makers from the region.

"Exposure at Cannes would give me the opportunity to meet film festival programmers and also commercial distributors," he said.

Khoo said he had already been contacted by a major American film distributor about 12 Storeys, but no deal had been finalised.

"Some of these distributors just want to buy all the films from this region. But they may not necessarily have a commercial viewing," he said.

Khoo is now looking forward to a successful commercial run in Singapore cinemas.

Mee Pok Man had a commercial screening but was deemed as only a "moderate blockbuster," grossing about 500,000 Singapore dollars.

Khoo hopes "12 Storeys" will gross more and perhaps repeat the success of another local film, "Army Daze," a comedy based on recruits going through basic military training in Singapore.

Army Daze grossed an "incredible" 1.8 million Singapore dollars after a run of about two months in local cinemas, he said.

Cathay-Golden Village has bought the Singapore distribution rights for 12 Storeys and a theatrical release is planned for July at more than a dozen local cinema halls.

Eric Khoo, 32, the first Singaporean film-maker to be invited to the Cannes Film Festival poses next to a poster of his latest film, 12 Storeys (Reuter photo)

Julia Sawalha — Too gorgeous to be true

By John Walsh

THERE ARE two problems in Julia Sawalha's life. One is that people tend to confuse her with Helena Bonham Carter. They show her to her rival's chair (and vice versa) at awards ceremonies. The second is that she was born too late. Quite soon after you first meet her, you realise that she is, in fact, an unreconstructed sixties chick masquerading as a nineties actress. Everything about her — her hair, her opinions, her passions, her spare-time activities, her maquillage, her jewellery — even her taste in music — all yell "sixties!" at you. If ever there was a girl born to have a bunch of marigolds drawn in biro on her upper cheek, Ms. Sawalha is it.

Which is odd, given that her fame still rests largely on her portrayal of a straight laced teenager with nothing but contempt for sixties culture, as expressed in the clothes, habits and vocabulary of her mother. Saffron and Absolutely Fabulous returned to the nation's television screens last week, to confirm that there's no prig like a female prig, and one who can embody one better than Julia S.

Another side of the actress can be seen, when Channel 4 presents McLibell, Dennis Woolf's three-hour reconstruction of the three-year courtroom jousting tournament between the McDonald's burger Leviathan and the two London anarchists, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, who dared to say rude things about them. Sawalha plays Steel as a sullen, endlessly sceptical figure amazed to find that she may have right on her side after all.

Between these embodiments of scorn, she has taken to costume drama like a duck to l'orange, playing the hoydenish, soldier-made Lydia Bennett in Andrew Davies's adaptation of Pride and Prejudice and her put-upon Mercy in Martin Chuzzlewit a year earlier. "I like the way everything swings back and forth in this job," she remarks. "One minute, I'm looking after a boozy mother in a modern comedy, the next I'm being beaten around the head by Keith Allen in a Dickens novel..."

So when you meet her you're prepared for a bit of a shape-raising acktress. Instead, you get a voluble gigglepuss with a Sarf London accent and a sensibility that's closer to Biba than Prada.

Sawalha is, shall we say, a surprise. Nothing you have seen, on small or big screen, prepares you for how amazingly pretty she is in the flesh, her completely round, doll-like face surmounted by a Medusa jungle of chestnut curls that cascade over her brow. Her eyes are piercingly grey-green and their whites shine like Martin Bell's best suit. Her long eyelashes have an unearthly, tarantulan quality that you might ascribe to art rather than nature, except that nothing about Sawalha appears to be false.

She is, it turns out, a vegetarian, an environmentalist, a feminist and a poet; but also a drinker, a smoker, a good-time girl and a chatterbox of appealing indiscretion. Nobody who can be so many contradictory things is trying to sell you an image of themselves. She sports a silver bracelet and three rings, with another one, set about with runic Eastern symbols, on a chain around her neck. And she laughs a lot, like an exhibit in a demonstration of hysteria before Victorian medical students. She seems, by turns, too silly for words, and too gorgeous to be true. Why had she wanted to play Helen Steel? Was it a personal crusade? "Yeah, definitely. When my agent rang me and said the words Greenpeace and McDonald's, I didn't have a clue about the McLibel case; but when I met Dennis Woolf, I thought, I've got to support this. I was a Greenpeace supporter already, and then I found that London Greenpeace is just five people and I got really interested." As the world knows, in 1985 the quintet were distributing leaflets (headed "What's Wrong With McDonald's?") laying several accusations at the hooves of the beef giant: That they tortured animals, caused food poisoning, exploited staff, sold food linked to cancer and heart disease; and, for good measure, that they were destroying the rainforests. McDonald's tracked down the leaflet's perpetrators and served libel writs on them. Three apologised; Steel and Morris didn't. The ensuing trial was expected to last three or four weeks; instead it dragged on for a record 313 days. "I really admired the story of their struggle not to be silenced," said Sawalha. "I hadn't had the time or the chance before to use my name to help... I believe in people saying what they want if they believe in fighting a cause."

Could she have become involved in a different cause? Say, the Bridgewater Four? "No, there's something special about attacking big corporations — and especially McDonald's." What had she got against McDonald's? "It distresses me when I take my seven-year-old nephew out. I cook healthy food, and he wants to go to McDonald's. He doesn't even like the food, he just wants the toys, the Happy Meals. I can't stand to see people walking down the street eating fast food."

On the face of it, I said, the role didn't offer a lot of scope for an actress, being confined to long periods in the defendants box looking cross and saying "Yeah?" to the snooty QC with her hands in her jeans pockets. "Not at all," said Sawalha, "it was a challenge because you had to play it down so much. It's very hard to dramatise something factual and not make it look overdone; but also not to make it look so under-dramatised that it's dull."

Sawalha has been a keen environmentalist for years, since she went to Windsor Great Park and watched, unsmiling, as Winnie the Whale and friends cavorted for the audience.

"It was so distressing to see the dolphins banging themselves up against the wall, having to perform. It disgusted me." She is a fan of the ineffable Swampy, is deeply suspicious of the judiciary system and has little faith in the New Labour dawn. "I think they're all as bad as each other. And I didn't vote last week. I was going to vote for old Tony, but to tell the truth I lost my voting card. I was running round, a tiny bit pissed, at half past six in the evening..."

This Bridge Jones side of her nature can be either grating or enchanting, depending on your point of view. Julia Sawalha radiates a kind of wayward innocence, a girlish helplessness that would bring out, I'm afraid, manly-protector instincts in the most new-mannish of New Men. In her spare time, she says, she writes poems, sets them to music and plays them on the guitar. She likes Fleetwood Mac and Led Zeppelin. Her favourite book appears to be a teenage novel called My Darling, My Hamburger. I watched in fascination as she extracted a Silk Cut, nipped off the final couple of centimetres and lit up. Excuse me, I said, but why...? "I'm giving up smoking. I only smoke down to there..."

Nothing prepares you for how amazingly pretty Julia Sawalha is in the flesh

She is, as her surname gives away but her complexion does not, half-Jordanian. She grew up in Upper Norwood in south-east London. Her father Nadim is an actor (he plays the wise and chortling Dr. Shaban in Dangerfield). Nadim created a Bedouin tent affair, made of satin, in the family dining-room, "and we would have feasts, with singing and dancing, with lots of arak, which is like ouzo and we were allowed to drink it because it was medicinal." Her mother is "from Surrey — completely." Was she aware of being different from her schoolfriends? "Only from people saying things like, 'You're dirty, cos you're an Arab and you eat with your hands.' And I'd go home and say to my Mum, 'Are we dirty?' And she'd say, 'Tell them Arabs are a damn sight cleaner than any of them.'"

But I grew up very proud of my culture and very happy to have, you know, two sides..." Was her father a Muslim? "No, he's a Christian. A spiritual man. But he never pushed any belief on us. When I was nine, I asked what God was, and should I believe in him and they said, 'If you want to pray at the end of your bed and believe in something up above, that's up to you.'"

Sawalha decided for herself on an acting career at the tender age of 10. She went to the Italia Conti stage school. "I'd always gone to dance classes, while my sister went to full-time school. They seemed equal options. Everyone was going off to ordinary school and I just thought, I'd like to sing and dance for half the day..." On the first day, she found herself in acting class, sitting in a circle and being told that a lump of invisible magic clay was being handed round, which she had to transform into something.

"And you watch this thing coming round, and your imagination is going bonkers, and suddenly it gets to you and something happens, you perform, you do something because you have to. And I felt so satisfied afterwards. I've always had to confront my fears." Did she still get fearful? "I'm going to Manchester next week, to the Royal Exchange, to appear in The Illusion by (she consulted her right hand where the details were written at the base of her thumb) Pierre Corneille, adapted by Tony Kushner. I'm quite terrified..."

Sawalha has yet to play the kind of full-on, explosively "unrestrained" leading lady she is clearly capable of playing. She sweetly confesses to being "a vamp in my own time, my personal time." Her forays into club land tended, in the past, to coincide with her relationship with Keith Allen, a legendary Groucho habitué. "The last time I was in the Groucho, I woke up in the morning and my finger was all black and blue, and bent back. I couldn't work out what I'd being doing with it. And I'd left without my shoes. It's just not good for me to frequent such places. It's funny," she said as a random thought struck her, "I grew up beside Crystal Palace, now I live beside Alexandra Palace, and they're the two highest points in London.

It must be the muezzin in your soul, I said smartly.

"What's that?"

A muezzin? A man who climbs to the highest vantage point in the city and calls the faithful to prayer.

"Oh," said Sawalha. It's another adorable trait of hers, not knowing things. I asked her what she thought of Ellen, the scandalous, Oh-my-god-she's-a-lesbian American sitcom. "I've never seen it. What is it?"

It's one of those Channel 4 imports, I said. Like Seinfeld."

"What's Seinfeld?"

And she means it. She's never seen Cheers or even Friends. Speaking of friends, I asked if she ever hung out with the two actresses with whom she must contest the period-costume territory in the future, Helena Bonham Carter and Kate Winslet. "No, I've always stayed away from other people in my profession. I've met Kate a couple of times. In fact, I lent her my bra once for a photo shoot." Come again? "She had a very see-through top on and I said, "you going to be photographed like that?" And she said innocently. "They asked me to." "I said, "I'd put something on under that if I were you," and she said "I haven't got anything." So I lent her my bra. I never saw her again." A thought struck her. "I never saw my bra again, either," and the divine Ms. Sawalha goes off into another (surely terminal this time) fusillade of giggles — The Independent.

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

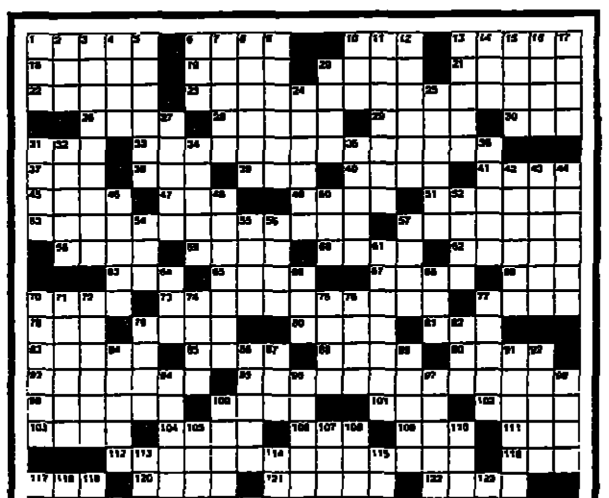
HAVE A GO AT IT
By Thomas W. Schier

ACROSS

1 Halloween figure
6 Certain col. dog
10 Silvery-gray
13 Puzzling games
18 "...lived in —"
19 Bog bird
20 Actor Danny De —
21 Of a certain line
22 Got a noseful
23 Have — (meddle)
26 Wet wigglers
28 Squirrel's treat
29 Flow copiously
30 Certain missile, briefly
31 Rotten
33 Have — (be vain)
37 Sch. subj.
38 Gielgud or Olivier, e.g.
39 Nine digit ID
40 In addition to
41 Be giddy
45 In — of
47 Dope on a horse
48 Muscle resiliency
51 Galapagos creature
53 Have — (possess)
57 Have — (afium)
58 Architectural pier
59 Suit to —
60 Pelion's sister peak
62 Reminiscent of things past
63 "Addams Family" cousin
65 Bodily injury
67 Toiler of old
69 Five-foot runner
70 Titled lady
73 Have — (be busy with)
77 Shipping allowance
78 Actress Mary of old
79 Sunburn result
80 Earth sci.
81 Mai —
83 Fragrant wood
85 Bone up on
88 March Madness org.
90 One of 21 popes
93 Have — (keep)
95 Have (be disinterested)
99 Lake Erie site
100 TV signal receiver
101 Generous — fault
102 Workbench item
103 Florist's cutting
104 Inverted carets
106 Moslem honorific
109 Coded matter
111 Always, to poets
112 Have — (deteriorated)
116 Brady Bill opponent
117 Supper's plea
120 13
121 Jetson's dog
122 — time (never)
124 Have — (avoid)
128 Cosmetic
131 Cager Shaq
132 Tilis and Torme
133 Holiday times
134 Vernacular
135 Scow
136 Fruit drink
137 Campus ordeal
138 Brutish one

DOWN

1 Exalted
2 Doctrine
3 Have — (predominate)
4 Singer Natalie
5 Telephone responses
6 Youth grp.
7 Couch potatoes' locales
8 Frumm and Segal
9 Buckberks
10 Make public
11 Plant [illegible]
12 Special [illegible]
13 Skier Phil
14 [illegible]
15 Moves quickly
16 Old time [illegible]
17 Appear (to be)
21 Sell
24 Another name for the Cam River
25 Become responsive
27 Tiny [illegible]
31 Lugosi or Bartok
32 Singer Kerr
34 Writer Jong
35 Nurses
36 Religious sect member
42 Egg-roll time
43 Loco for a shield
44 Newspaper arrangement
46 Set free
49 Roadwa, [illegible]
50 Yoko —
52 "Primal Fear" star
54 Consume
55 Nasty
56 Nothing more than
57 [illegible]
61 Adhesive, for one
64 — the line (toe)
66 Flavor enhancer abbr.
68 After expenses
70 Tickets
71 "We — amused" (Queen Victoria)
72 Interfere with
74 Teen outcast
75 Phnom —
76 Centers of focus
77 [illegible] county
79 Urge
82 AZ town
84 Instructor's remarks
86 [illegible]
87 — and spirits
89 Classical [illegible]
91 Have — (succeed)
92 "My Life in Court" [illegible]
94 [illegible]
96 [illegible]
97 Singer Tucker
98 River in Italy
100 Charged, as an obligation
105 Riddle
107 Jump in the ocean
108 Declare
110 Off the beaten path
113 Bench
114 Small boys
115 Lavishes affection
117 [illegible]
118 [illegible] Chaplin
119 [illegible]
123 Writer Ephron
125 Crime
126 Bullring shout
127 Presidential monogram
129 [illegible]
130 [illegible]



Diagramless, 19x19
By Chuck Deodene

ACROSS

1 Farm stable
6 Favoring
9 Primordial arrow
10 These folks
11 Fruit spread
14 Cranium
15 Barrow or Jaffe
16 Skin soother
18 Avid
21 Climbing vine
22 Race loser
24 "— fan tutte"
26 Cluck of reproach
27 Wriggling
28 Turkish capital
30 Dawn drops
31 English essayist
36 Chaos
37 Frenchman's sea
38 Bottle top
41 Witch's [illegible]
43 Haydn piece
45 Chapel seat
46 Series [illegible]
48 "— your [illegible]"
49 Big sideburns
53 Busy
56 Sound system
57 Iowa city
59 Cherry seed
61 Some doors
62 Transporter
64 Song syllable
66 Brooklyn [illegible]
70 Witches, in fairy tales
71 Car for hire
72 Stockpile
75 Allow
76 Joie de vivre
77 Soda servers
78 Sly
79 Stage orphan

DOWN

1 — grabs arts
2 Squeal of fright
3 Fastener
4 French airport
5 Corner of [illegible]
6 Fakir
7 Monthly charge
8 Nebraska Amerinds
10 Insignificant
11 Cinema shark
12 Standoffish
13 Dropped anchor
17 Gladden
19 Hard or floppy items
20 Caribou
23 Original
24 Mineral in milk
25 "— Fine Day"
26 Domesticates
29 Hit butts heads
31 Poker piece
32 Tomcat's foe
33 Ahead to
34 Cole's portrayer
35 [illegible] High footballers
38 Roman historian
39 Crushing
40 Shivers
42 Pizza leftover
44 Japanese drama
47 "Addams Family" cousin
50 Lay of the land
51 Mountain nymph
52 Actor Beatty
53 Lobbying org.
54 Plain-living sect
55 Deadly
58 Moat, blockade
59 [illegible]
60 Foot feature
63 Sadness
64 El Paso resident
66 Parrot Nathan
67 Western peninsula
68 Last word
69 Saga
73 Viet [illegible]
74 Opposite of NNW

Last Week's Cryptograms

1. Mean insurance agent rips off his brother by selling him a policy that only pays if auto is hit by a trolley.
2. At each reunion, what is it that makes you wonder why your classmates look so old?
3. Unable to snag boyfriend of her choice, shy girl was cut down to sighs.
4. Careful inspections often find fleas and other such pests on pets.

CRYPTOGRAMS

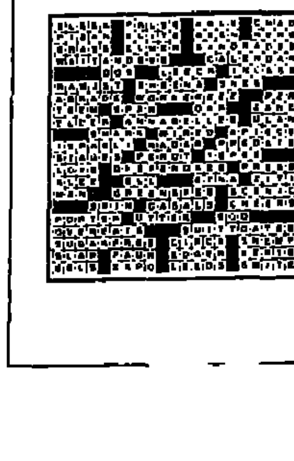
1. TQNP ULNQJD JW HAJDK QKLCK CNHNEH FIEK TNDQRDNKWB EALE AK QKRE PKANWB, TKEH FJQB HAJIQBKD. — By Earl Irvland

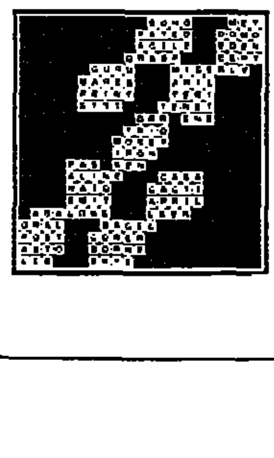
2. BLDY HYOXIPLUB CULPTPFR SLEFE GLDCFTOH TPLEA IEPPEP GUYTAYK PR POX ITSTOOTH-BARFY FETE. — By Ed Huddleson

3. LAB EYOY SIKEER CAN KARL IGZ ITRAYD ZOGEZOY CIRUTH KID. ZIZ KITTY FUR "RB TUDDTO YFISON." — By K.C. Doyle

4. BGMIN EGM KCE C YCZLE ACID BLZADL GY IGOT CTG BCK C TLDCA NCOD? — By Adam Christopher

SOLUTIONS OF LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE





McCartney reveals almost all in Internet session

LONDON (R) — Sir Paul McCartney took to the Internet Saturday for a live chat with some of the three million fans who bombarded him with questions ranging from his tastes in modern music to his preferred underwear.

The former Beatle, knighted by Queen Elizabeth earlier this year for his services to pop music, revealed that the fab four would probably have got together again if John Lennon had not been murdered in 1980.

Getting through 200 questions in a 90-minute session, the cheeky lad from Liverpool said his greatest achievement was his four children and said he kept his medal from the Queen by his bed.

Much of the Internet chat session was broadcast live on satellite television, but it would have taken McCartney an estimated six years to answer all three million of the questions submitted.

U.S. President Bill Clinton filmed a recorded tribute, telling McCartney that the 1966 hit Eleanor Rigby was "the most powerful song I have ever heard."

Asked if the Beatles 1996 Anthology album would have spurred the Liverpool band to reunite if Lennon had not been killed, McCartney said: "It's highly likely we would have been reunited before the Anthology. We have had lots of offers, but without John there is no Beatles."

McCartney said he liked the British rock band Oasis — who have acknowledged being inspired by the Beatles — and said his favourite guitarist of all time was Jimi Hendrix.

The only question he refused to answer was whether he wore briefs or boxer shorts.

Someone called Rosie asked him about his favourite underwear. He said: "You would not believe the answer, so I will stay enigmatic about that."

Another questioner wanted to know if the knighthood had changed his life.

"It's a huge honour. We carry on as if before but I get to make my girlfriend a lady."

McCartney said he cherished his wife Linda and their children. "It's not easy to bring up kids when you are in show business. Me and Linda consider we have good kids."

A spokesman for McCartney said the three million questions submitted made the former Beatle "the most questioned man in history."

"We did not imagine there would be so many questions. We thought there would be only around 300,000. No one has been questioned on this scale before," the spokesman told reporters.

ANSWERS

PUZZLES

(A) SANTA'S TRIP

— France, America, Spain.

* * *

(B) FILLING THE TIME

— Six miles.

* * * *

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. From the game of marbles.
2. One and one-sixth of a mile.
3. Sea rovers from Scandinavia.
4. Six litres.
5. Jupiter.
6. Austrian.
7. Robin Hood.
8. False.

Global tobacco curb need not hinge on U.S., says UNICEF chief

NEW YORK — The possibility of a setback in efforts to settle tobacco liability cases in the United States does not relieve governments of responsibility to curb the industry's power to entrap children and adolescents elsewhere in the world, Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said last week in a press release.

"Whatever the outcome of the U.S. negotiations, the international community urgently needs a comprehensive, long-term strategy to combat tobacco, particularly in the developing world," Bellamy said. "Given the tobacco industry's increasing focus on developing country sales, the need for action is more pressing than ever."

Bellamy spoke in the wake of press reports that optimism is fading for an omnibus liability settlement between major U.S.-based tobacco companies and the attorneys general of some two dozen states. Ideally, Bellamy said, any future restrictions on the sale and promotion of tobacco products in the U.S. market should be applied globally.

On May 1, the UNICEF chief urged that the U.S. talks be a first step towards worldwide restrictions on the promotion and sale of tobacco products, especially to children and young people in developing countries. She said the marketing of tobacco products is undermining UNICEF's efforts to save the lives of millions of children a year from preventable diseases.

An estimated 300 million of today's children and teen-agers will eventually die of tobacco-related illness, a third of them in developing countries. The total is projected to rise substantially within 30 years, with the proportion of developing world deaths jumping to two-thirds.

Bellamy said UNICEF welcomed a recent pledge by environmental officials from the G-7 leading industrial nations, the Russian Federation and the European Union to work together to promote education and public awareness of the environmental hazards of tobacco smoke to children. The officials affirmed that tobacco smoke, a known human carcinogen, is a "significant public health risk to young children" that weakens lung capacity and causes respiratory disorders.

Medical researchers have established clear links between smoking in the home and the incidence of acute respiratory infections and asthma in children exposed to second-band tobacco smoke.

"Acute respiratory infections already kill 4 million out of the 12 million children under five who die each year in developing countries," Bellamy said. "Without across-the-board action to curb smoking, those numbers are likely to rise in direct proportion to the global marketing activities of the tobacco industry."

Bellamy today reiterated the need for prohibitions on the sale of tobacco to minors, greatly increased taxation of tobacco products and intensified efforts to make the public aware of the addictive qualities of nicotine and the overall dangers of smoking. She said these and other measures are mandated by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires governments to take steps to promote the health of infants and children, protect them from drugs and exploitation and ensure that there is adequate health education.

She stressed that rather than recommending specific mechanisms through which governments might address the tobacco issue, UNICEF hoped to draw attention to the urgency of the problem and the range of steps that might be used to bring pressure to bear on the tobacco industry. Since the U.S. talks began, advocates for global tobacco curbs have been discussing which elements of a possible settlement could be useful in fashioning worldwide curbs, and how, in practical terms, this might come about.

"An estimated 300 million of today's children and teen-agers will eventually die of tobacco-related illness, a third of them in developing countries. The total is projected to rise substantially within 30 years, with the proportion of developing world deaths jumping to two-thirds."

"There is obviously a great deal of groundwork that needs to be done," Bellamy said. Under debate are such ideas as a requirement that U.S.-based tobacco companies not market tobacco products to non-smoking women and children, or any non-smoking population anywhere in the world; that U.S. trade officials agree not to help companies penetrate closed markets outside the United States; that the tobacco industry be required to make substantial lump-sum contributions to help multilateral agencies promote tobacco regulation and education; and that any eventual settlement of tobacco-liability lawsuits in the U.S. — a sum that could total $375 billion over 25 years — not be financed by international sales.

Smoking among people who took up the habit at an early age currently claims 3 million lives a year worldwide, a third of them in developing countries. If current smoking rates continue to rise, that figure is expected to jump to 10 million a year, with 70 per cent of the deaths occurring in the developing world.

UNICEF Press Release

Governance — one of UNDP's main areas of focus in developing countries

TWO RECENT United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publications, "Governance for Sustainable Human Development" and "Reconceptualising Governance", examine the critical role of good governance in promoting economic development and increasing the possibility of all people in society to improve their living conditions.

Good governance is first and foremost transparent, accountable and equitable participation. It promotes the rule of law — not the rule of men — and equal justice under the law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard in the decision-making process.

More than a third of UNDP-programme expenditures is currently allocated to governance projects in developing and transition countries. The policy papers identify five priority areas for governance programming that UNDP believes will best achieve the overall goals of eradicating poverty and attaining sustainable human development. They include support to: governing institutions — legislatures, judiciaries and electoral bodies; public and private sector management; decentralisation and support to local governance; civil society organisations; governance in special circumstances, such as post-crisis situations.

UNDP is the largest provider of developing grants. Its support to strengthening governance practices and institutions aims to foster long-term economic growth, social cohesion and political stability in developing and transition countries.

"Governance for Sustainable Human Development" provides a framework for future assistance in support of good governance projects in such countries. It defines governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels, comprising the processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

This broad concept of governance includes not only the state, but also the private sector and the civil society. All three are essential to progress and UNDP is now expanding its support to civil society organisations and the private sector in an effort to promote development at every level of society.

Governance is no longer a system in national isolation, the policy paper observes. Rather, governance institutions must today interact globally, gain inspiration from international trends and provide a national environment that is conducive to overall development.

The paper outlines UNDP's role in helping countries strengthen their governance institutions to better meet the political and economic challenges posed by the forces of globalisation.

Reconceptualising governance provides an in-depth discussion on the role of governance in development. It examines the specific impact of the three domains of governance — the state, the private sector, and civil society — on poverty eradication policies, promotion of economic growth, protection of the environment, enhancement of central and local government performance and promotion of gender equality and social cohesion.

The publication also explores the dramatic changes in economic, political and social systems since the early 1980s and the impact these changes have had on national governance institutions and sustainable human development. It examines the challenges posed by environmental degradation, economic globalisation, religious and ethnic tensions, the collapse of Communism and the emergence of regional alliances.

It issues a call for international aid organisations to find ways to incorporate concepts of good governance into the design and implementation of all their development activities.

UNDP programmes in the Middle East

Improvement of Income tax administration in Jordan

In Jordan, both the manpower resources and the computer hardware capacity of the Income Tax Department are severely limited. As a result, it is impossible for the government to ensure full compliance with the existing tax legislation. UNDP's efforts are aimed at introducing major changes in the processing and administration of income taxes, including the installation of new high-capacity computer hardware and the elaboration of a comprehensive information system which will make it much easier for tax authorities to access relevant income tax data and to monitor tax payer compliance. Once in operation, the new income tax system is expected to result in an income tax revenue of over $200 million in the next three to four years.

Government and private-sector development in Egypt

Egypt is currently moving from a centrally planned economy towards an economic system based on free-market principles. During this transition it has become clear that reform of the civil service would be required in order for it to more constructively support the role of the private sector in overall economic development. UNDP assists a government programme designed to promote economic growth and private sector development through the reform and strengthening of the civil service.

Strengthening Palestinian Authority's public administration

The main goal of this UNDP project is to improve public administration, planning and policy development in the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It will help increase the technical and implementation capacities of the Palestinian ministries, municipalities and village councils, and civil society organisations. It will also help identify longer-term initiatives which are essential to the overall development of the Palestinian territories.

Technical cooperation management in Lebanon

Lebanon's national reconstruction plans, initiated after years of civil war, had initially been hampered by poor public administration capacities and a lack of resources due to large budget deficits. This UNDP project assists the Lebanese government in the coordination of technical assistance for the country's national administrative rehabilitation programme. A special administrative unit was established to oversee the rebuilding and development of the country's institutional capacity, to coordinate technical assistance and to mobilise resources required for national rehabilitation.

China water project to tame Yellow River 'monster'

XIAOLANGDI, China (R) — What do you do with a river that rises 10 cm a year and already looms perilously over cities that sit under the shadow of the dikes that hold it in?

China believes the answer, at least for now, is its multi-billion dollar Xiaolangdi dam project, in the central province of Henan.

Through the centuries, deposits of silt have raised the bed of the Yellow River so high that its waters now look down upon many cities and towns along its banks.

"In the past, hundreds of years the dikes have been raised many times so that the river is higher than the surrounding area in many places," said Wang Xianru, deputy director of the Yellow River Water And Hydropower Development Corp.

Beijing spends $1.2 billion each decade on shoring up the banks to keep at bay the threat that could claim tens of millions of lives should the river burst its dikes.

Some 4,000 villages were wiped out and untold millions of peasants drowned in 1938 when nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek ordered the dikes blown up to try to halt advancing Japanese invaders.

At the core of the $4.17 billion project near Henan's capital Zhengzhou is a 154-metre rock and earth-filled dam laced with a complex web of 16 tunnels that also thread through the river's left bank.

The tunnels are intended to regulate the river's huge silt load and erratic water flow.

"Electricity generation is only a lesser priority of the Xiaolangdi project, with flood control being first," said Mr. Wang, whose company is in charge of the project.

Engineers spent 30 years designing the dam, which will be the largest of its kind in China. It is far more intricate than its much bigger, more expensive and highly publicised cousin at the three gorges on the Yangtze River.

"The project has several characteristics, one of which is its complexity," Mr. Wang said, gesturing to the 14.5-metre-wide tunnels that burrow more than one km through a hill on the left bank of the river.

"The rock conditions here are not very good, so it is very difficult to proceed with the job," he said.

A vast 12.5 billion-cubic-metre reservoir behind the dam is to serve as a catch basin for silt and will be capable of holding 7.5 billion cubic metres of sediment before it finally fills up after about 30 years.

Mr. Wang said he hoped the temporary halt in the flow of silt would buy time to come up with a more permanent solution. "At that time, our children will think of something to do," he said.

The reservoir would also allow dam operators to regulate the Yellow River's notoriously fitful flow, which fluctuated between a dawdling 1,500 cubic metres per second and a raging 16,000 cubic metres per second, Mr. Wang said.

Although water levels are now at record lows, the river has claimed tens of millions of lives over the centuries, earning it the moniker "China's sorrow".

The World Bank is helping to bankroll Xiaolangdi because the project was deemed too risky to attract private investment, said Pieter Bottelier, chief of the World Bank's China Mission.

The project would use more than $1.109 billion in foreign funds, with $1 billion of that coming from a World Bank loan and the remainder from foreign commercial credits, Mr. Wang said.

Six 300-megawatt generators would go on line between 1999 and 2001 to help slake central China's growing demand for energy, said Mr. Wang.

Mr. Wang's company has already signed a $55.8 million contract with German firm J.M. Voith Ag for the turbines and will issue tenders in October for more than $44 million worth of auxiliary equipment such as a computer control system.

Another $110 million will go towards resettling more than 200,000 people whose homes will be flooded when the river is blocked on Oct. 31 this year, one month before the Yangtze is diverted for the three gorges dam.

The World Bank's Bottelier said irrigation fees collected from villages and cities downstream would pay back 70 percent of the project cost although government water pricing would have to be changed.

China has given no hint it plans to ease controls on current prices in the region, held artificially low by the state.

"The water (price) will have to go up to a much higher level to pay for that dam," Mr. Bottelier said.

Wang Xianru, deputy director of the Yellow River Water and Hydropower Development Corp, explains construction of the Xiaolangdi dam on China's Yellow River at the project's site in central Henan province. The $4.17 billion project aims to put a halt to centuries of the deadly floods that have earned the river the sobriquet of 'China's Sorrow'. Chinese engineers say the 154-metre-high dam, with its 16 water and silt regulation tunnels, is far more complex than its costlier and more controversial cousin at the Yangtze River's Three Gorges (Reuter photo)

Jordan seeks $600m Paris Club debt rescheduling

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuters

AMMAN — Jordan hopes to conclude a deal this week to reschedule the last $600 million tranche of over $3.5 billion of debt owed to Western creditors, Deputy Central Bank Governor Michel Marto has said.

Dr. Marto said the talks with the Paris Club creditors due to start Thursday were the fourth major and final rescheduling round, completing the restructuring of the $3.5-$4.0 billion debt incurred in the 1980s.

Economists say a favourable rescheduling is essential to push ahead with Jordan's economic reforms.

"We expect to conclude an exit rescheduling deal with the Paris Club for around $600 million of our debt on very favourable terms over a long period," Dr. Marto told Reuters.

Jordanian officials had earlier said the deal would cover $1.2 billion of debts.

The deal would reschedule outstanding principal and interest payments due between May 1997 to February 1999, Dr. Marto said.

Jordan's first restructuring of its debt was in 1989 after an economic crisis which forced the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to intervene when the Kingdom failed to service $8 billion of foreign debt.

After the disruption of the 1990 Gulf crisis, rescheduling was restarted with a February 1992 accord.

The last major accord in June 1994 rescheduled $1.2 billion of the Kingdom's debts over 20 years, including 10 years' grace period. A limited accord last October rescheduled debt worth a total of $308 million slated for repayment between July 1996 and May 1997.

The new accord should help Jordan reduce its debt repayment burden and cushion the impact of tough IMF-directed economic reforms. Currently Jordan pays around $500 million in debt servicing annually.

Jordan hopes that with support from the IMF and the World Bank it could get even better rescheduling terms from those it secured in 1994, officials said.

Dr. Marto said Jordan's total official debt stood at $6.4 billion of which $3.5 billion to $4 billion was owed to bilateral official creditors with the rest concessional loans from agencies such as the World Bank and Arab aid funds.

This excludes $1.3 billion of rescheduled London Club commercial debt which was collaterised in Brady bonds in 1994.

Jordan hopes its record so far in pursuing an IMF-directed economic restructuring programme will provide it with a sympathetic hearing from official creditors.

Jordan will argue to the Paris Club that it has gone a long way in meeting IMF growth targets and deserves favourable terms to ensure it can comfortably surmount major political and social hurdles anticipated as it undertakes advanced economic reforms.

Jordan will begin a new three year IMF-guided programme in 1998 expected to focus on accelerating the pace of economic structural reforms including rapid privatisation.

But officials privately say the country is not likely to get support for any outright debt forgiveness although they believe creditors are looking favourably at writing off debt in return for investment commitments.

Because Jordan has a per capita earnings in excess of $1,000, Jordan is classed as a middle income country which gives it less favourable treatment. Jordan's debt to gross domestic product ratio has fallen to 90 per cent in 1996 from a peak of 203.4 per cent in 1991.

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Unemployment and poverty deteriorating in Palestinian areas

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Participants in a seminar on economic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip blamed Israeli authorities for poverty and unemployment in these areas and said that economic conditions in the Palestinian self-rule areas have worsened following 1993 peace accord.

"It is very unfortunate but also abundantly clear that the Palestinian economy has deteriorated badly since the signing of the Oslo agreement," said Jean-Michel Dumont, secretary-general of the Brussels-based Parliament Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation in his paper submitted at the U.N.-sponsored seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people.

"Unemployment in Gaza is currently estimated at a depressing 50-60 per cent, with the highest unemployment rate in the refugee camps. The situation in the West Bank is less depressing as the rate is only 24 per cent. In addition, a further 10-12 per cent are severely under employed," Mr. Dumont said.

The European official said that there are direct links between these figures and border closures between Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas. He added that many Palestinians lost their income during the closures which resulted as well in decreasing demand on Palestinian products in the West bank and Gaza Strip.

Statistics indicate that in 1993, Israel closed the Palestinian territories for 91 days, compared with 71 days in 1992, 125 in 1995 and 310 in 1996.

Palestinian officials said that total loss incurred because of the closure amounted to $1.2 billion every year.

Mr. Dumont emphasised in his six-page report that following the 1993 Oslo accord and "mainly due to the border closures", income has dropped from $1,800 a year in the West Bank and $1,200 a year in Gaza, to $ 950 and $ 600 respectively.

He said that a permanent link between both parts of the Palestinian territories, continuous link with the outside world, and permitting Palestinian workers to enter Israel are prerequisites to ensure economic development in the West bank and the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Dumont accused the United States of being biased towards Israel and called for a balanced mediation to solve the deadlock in the peace process.

Diab Alloush, deputy minister of social affairs at the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said continuous closures, the absence of political stability in the self-rule areas and the confiscation of lands by Israel lead to poverty increase among the Palestinians.

Based on 1997 figures which indicate that families who receive less than $998,5 annually are considered below the poverty line, he estimated the poverty rate at 20 per cent in the West Bank and at 40 per cent in the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Alloush said in his report that if Israeli poverty standards of $500 monthly are to be considered, "poverty in the PNA territories will jump into 60-70 per cent."

He said that despite economic hardships, the PNA is trying to eradicate poverty through employing more than 35,000 persons during the closure time and giving annual pension to more than 30,000 families at a monthly cost of $700,000.

Hassan Abu Libdeh, President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of statistics, said no matter what the PNA does to eradicates poverty, "it is always the case that the Israelis are trying to turn the table up on our head."

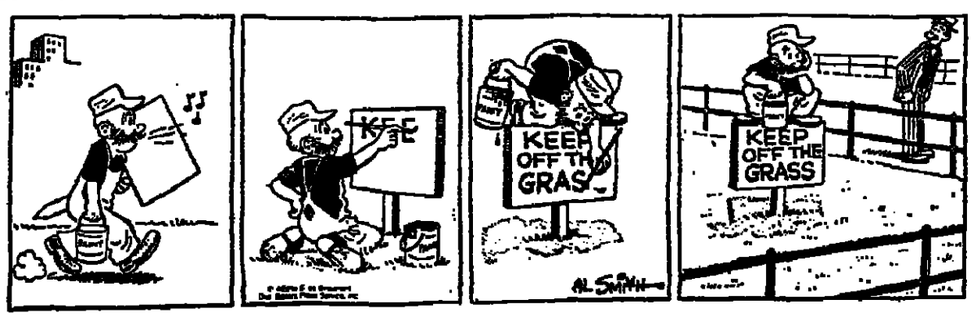
Mr. Abu Libdeh called on the U.N. agencies to help the PNA in its endeavour to eradicate poverty by "drawing on their experience in other parts of the world and injecting funds into those institutions which are going to be involved in this process."

He urged them also to continue supporting small programmes for creating jobs.

Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff



REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 21/05/97 18:54

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.6916	0.6080	1.4067	114.00	1.3662	1683.80	1.9014	5.7035
DE Mark	0.5912	-	0.3592	0.8315	67.39	0.8075	995.30	1.1249	3.3728
GB Sterling	1.6447	2.7835	-	2.3137	188.92	2.2470	2734.78	3.1255	9.3714
CH Franc	0.7109	120.09	0.4315	-	81.07	0.9706	1182.94	134.90	4.0476
JP Yen	0.0088	1.4818	0.5324	1.2322	-	1.1961	14.57	166.54	4.9944
CA Dollar	0.7320	1.2459	0.4443	1.0400	1.20	-	1222.21	1.4004	4.1966
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0159	0.3648	0.0845	1480.71	0.8203	-	11.42	3.4231
NL Guilder	0.5259	88.84	0.3194	73.97	59.96	0.7181	874.95	-	2.9968
FR Franc	0.1753	0.2966	0.1065	24.6770	20.00	0.2395	33.34	33.3400	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7504	0.3770	3.6403	0.3013	3.6726	1537.50	3.3870
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2972	0.5325	5.1417	0.4256	5.1873	2171.61	4.7839
GB Sterling	0.2666	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0803	0.98	409.96	0.9031
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	9.9485	-	9.66	0.7993	9.74	4078.47	8.9846
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0302	1.0302	-	0.0828	1.01	422.36	0.9304
Kuwait Dinar	3.3187	2.3497	12.4466	1.2511	12.08	-	12.19	5102.55	0.9304
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	0.1026	0.9912	0.0820	-	418.64	0.9222
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4605	2.4393	0.2452	2.3677	0.1960	2.3887	-	2.2029
Egyptian	0.2952	0.2090	1.1073	0.1113	1.0748	0.0890	1.0843	453.94	-

Energy

Oils	Last	revious
Brent	20.40	20.30
W. Texa	21.50	21.15
Bonny	20.40	20.30
Dubai	19.05	19.00
UL Gas	207.00	194.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4513	0.1621	0.37535	30.4368
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46087	0.16555	0.3833	31.082
KW Dinar	3.3187	5.61798	2.01776	4.67071	378.788
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.49035	1.61264	3.73413	302.847
CY Pound	1.9801	3.35	1.2036	2.7877	225.788

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	342.6	343.1
Silver (oz's)	4.69	4.71
Platinum (oz's)	393.5	394.5
AL (3 Months)	1644	1645
CU (3 Months)	2499	2500
Zinc (3 Months)	1349	1350
Lead (3 Months	636	637
NI (3 Months)	7560	7570

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period / Crncy	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year
USD	5.55	5.67	5.84	5.95	6.06
GBP	6.12	6.25	6.44	6.62	6.68
JPY	0.44	0.44	0.52	0.67	0.84
DEM	3.00	3.04	3.11	3.00	3.20
FRF	3.20	3.33	3.40	3.43	3.46
CHF	1.51	1.56	1.60	1.43	1.53
ITL	6.65	6.59	6.50	6.41	6.37

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	7295.22	-8.24	-0.11	7352.91	7291.93	7303.46
Newyork	S&P 500	840.85	-0.78	-0.09	846.87	840.49	841.66
London	FT-SE 100	4642	34.5	0.75	4653.8	4616.7	4607.5
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	19841.98	-490.85	-2.41	20322.4	19763.9	20332.8
Paris	CAC 40	2786.35	35.24	1.28	2800.34	2757.03	2751.11
Frankfurt	DAX	3596.09	52.66	1.49	3596.96	3567.42	3543.43

Energy

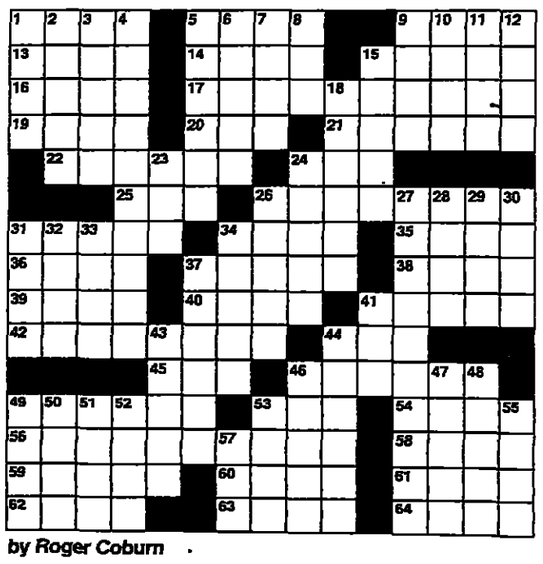
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	260.33	Spot
Cocoa ($/ton)	1487	Spot
Sugar ($/ton)	324.3	Spot
Wheat ($/ton)	167	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	22.94	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	157	Spot
Barley ($/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice ($/ton)	480	Spot

* JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1712	1.1771
DE Mark	0.4222	0.4243
CH Franc	0.5121	0.5147
FR Franc	0.1254	0.126
JP Yen	0.6198	0.6229
NL Guilder	0.3756	0.3775
IT Lira	0.4282	0.4303

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword



by Roger Coburn

ACROSS
1 Both: pref.
5 Hollow
9 Swank
13 Convene
14 Ellipse
15 Letter from Greece
16 "The first time — Paris"
17 Optimistic explorer's words?
19 "And — bed"
20 Shooter's org.
21 Playful critters
22 City on the Loire
24 300
25 Tiny bit
26 Bindings
31 Amulet
34 Lass
35 O'Hara's place
36 Mrs. Chaplin
37 Trumpet sound
38 Legal right
39 Ms. Tennille
40 Yesteryear
41 "Oh, come —..."
42 Freeloaders
44 Ad —
45 Place
46 Somber
49 Makes jubilant
53 Clamor
54 Dates
56 Optimistic underdog's words?
58 "— Bede"
59 Wrongs
60 List extender
61 Food and drink
62 Travel
63 Elusive
64 Otherwise

DOWN
1 Sorbonne pals
2 Subatomic particle
3 — hasty retreat
4 Optimistic weatherman's words?
5 Defeated
6 States strongly
7 Tra —
8 Building wing
9 Confined
10 Ye — Shoppe
11 Agitate
12 Fedora and boater
15 Get rid of
18 Ship section
23 Beret kin
24 John Le —
26 Iago and Pinocchio
27 Optimistic baggage man's words?
28 Fasten
29 Author Zane
30 Level-headed
31 Folding beds
32 Circular band
33 — Domini
34 Great honor
37 Part of NbE
41 Trouble
43 Valleys
44 Friendless
46 Rope fiber
47 Hero's award
48 Approaches
49 Pitcher
50 Son of Jacob
51 Formic, e.g.
52 Story
53 Be very fond
55 Hook's mate
57 Sheltered side

C	A	S	A	B	A	S		M	A	N	O	W	A	R
U	N	T	W	I	S	T		A	B	I	L	E	N	E
S	T	R	E	A	K	Y		D	E	P	E	N	D	S
T	I	A		S	E	L	E	C	T	S		T	O	E
A	Q	U	A		D	I	V	A	S		C	A	V	E
R	U	S	S	E		Z	A	P		C	O	P	E	D
D	E	S	P	I	S	E	S		D	I	N	E	R	S
		I	D	E	S		D	E	N	T				
H	E	B	R	E	W		R	E	S	C	R	I	P	T
E	M	E	E	R		M	I	S		H	O	M	E	R
L	A	R	D		R	O	T	O	R		L	O	R	E
I	N	A		P	U	Z	Z	L	E	S		G	I	P
P	A	T	E	L	L	A		A	L	A	M	E	D	A
A	T	E	L	I	E	R		T	A	K	E	N	O	N
D	E	S	S	E	R	T		E	Y	E	L	E	T	S

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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MAY 22, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A change in attitude today can be helpful when dealing with others. Be more thoughtful of older friends and thereby avoid any difficulty. Make sure your career is running smoothly if you go out tonight with your mate.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If you seek out new sources today, you can get some fine financial advice. Rid yourself of old-fashioned ideas and practises which don't apply anymore. Be understanding to the desires of your mate and show much appreciation.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your good friends, as always, can be quite supportive and pull you out of that "blue funk" you've been in, so seek out their advice. Avoid a fellow associate who tries to put down your ideas and make you feel small.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Let people see the logical side of your mind today, and you can be quite impressive through your actions. Make sure affection and thoughtfulness towards your mate is important to him or her later this evening.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Give up on a past close friend who always depresses you, and today welcome a new one who can help you as much as you help him or her. Attend to your financial affairs later this evening so that there will be funds available.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Settle a difference between yourself and a family tie who can introduce you to some important people who can be beneficial to your career activities. You may have some added expenses later this evening, so tend to your credit.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Stay away today from boring people and routines. Be alert for new opportunities and ideas which can be beneficial to your success. Plan a trip which will broaden your horizons and get you out of a jam.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Make sure you keep any promises you've made today even though this may temporarily weaken your bank account. Be sure that your advisor is giving you good advice, so that there won't be any mistakes made.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Settle the source of a long-standing concern today, and you can better deal with present situations. Listen to the advice of a fellow associate who you know has good judgement in any business related activities.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Don't relay today so much on outsiders when your intuitions is working so well. Stop being such a hypochondriac, and use your mind to convince your body that it is well and you are in tip-top condition physically.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A little more enthusiasm in your regular duties today can bring you better results if you keep an eye out. Don't go off on any tangents which aren't beneficial. Visit some acquaintances and old friends later this evening.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Give full attention to the home scene today, and get everything you've been neglecting in order. if you entertain later this evening, you can make an excellent impression on guests by making them feel more comfortable.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

Public, private institutions have wealth of information for investors

By Samir Ghawi

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Investors contemplating an industrial project in the Kingdom can have at least half of their homework done if they seek the assistance of the Amman Chamber of Industry or the Industrial Development Bank in addition to the public sector institutions, namely the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Investment Promotion Corporation.

According to Madelein Mazzawi, head of Division of Studies and Research at the Industrial Development Bank (IDB), a wide range of information is available at the bank to guide investors and assist them in selecting and evaluating potentially viable projects. The information covers a market review or a pre-feasibility study to identify and analyse an industry before embarking on further detailed analysis.

Ms. Mazzawi told the Jordan Times Wednesday that the IDB can provide valuable advice to investors in order to avoid failing at a business venture.

Noting that the bank continuously reviews the markets and monitors all development, Ms. Mazzawi said the bank at present would not encourage investors to delve into the areas of manufacturing detergents, woven plastic bags (rafia), vegetable oil, reinforced steel, olive presses and sulpha chemical industries.

She indicated that the market has reached the saturation point in the mentioned industries although the IDB would continue financing raw material imports and the introduction of new technology to existing projects.

The IDB official said the bank is even willing to reconsider its position and finance a project if the operations of that industry will be carried out under licence from a foreign entity.

Ms. Mazzawi revealed that the saturation level has reached the hotel business. She specifically mentioned Petra where the IDB is now considering the applications to set up hotels there on a case by case basis.

Reem Badran, acting director general of the Investment Promotion Corporation (IPC) told the Jordan Times that investors can choose from a list containing ideas and brief studies about nearly 225 projects available at the institution.

Ms. Badran indicated that the IPC provides all the services that an investor needs from giving him/her a general idea about Jordan and the business climate in the Kingdom to as far as arranging meetings and appointments for the persons with various officials and concerned parties. In addition, all legal requirements and information about economic and business laws in the country are included in the IPC programme to assist investors.

The second major area where IPC provides services is in matching Jordanian and foreign investors to form joint ventures. Working on a data base of interested parties, Ms. Badran pointed out, the IPC can offer the interested parties with information and a profile of any firm seeking a foreign on a Jordanian partner.

The third category includes lists of large government projects that await private sector willingness to shoulder them. They involve many government ministries and departments as they concern telecommunications (four projects), water (one project), power (five projects), transportation (five projects including railways) and tourism among many others, Ms. Badran explained.

Asked about the demand on these services, Ms. Badran said many people approach the IPC for inquiries and information but the problem is that "they do not return to tell us what has happened and if they were successful or not."

"We have matched a number of companies for joint ventures but have no idea what the results were although we usually emphasise to the investors the importance of their feedback," she indicated. "It seems to be the same problem everywhere as IPCs in other countries have similar difficulties."

The role of the Amman Chamber of Industry is more of a focal point as it provides the investors with general information about the industrial sector in the Kingdom, Ahmad Sa'di, head of studies and research at the chamber, said.

He indicated that the chamber points out to investors the steps required for registration and guides them to the various parties of concern and interest.

"Should an investor request information regarding competition and market conditions in general, we readily provide him/her with a comprehensive studies and research which are always available at the chamber," Mr. Sa'di said.

He noted that the chamber is also a focal point for investors who request information about tax laws and economic regulations as well as the names and addresses for business contacts.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Jordan Ceramic Industries Company doubles capital, distributes dividends at a rate of 20%

** THE GENERAL assembly of the Jordan Ceramic Industries Company approved in an extraordinary session raising the company's capital from JD2.5 million to JD5 million and distributing a bonus share to shareholders for every share they own. In its ordinary session, the general assembly approved the recommendation of the board of directors to distribute cash dividends at a rate of 20 per cent.

Board Chairman Mamdouh Abu Hassan told the shareholders that the company achieved high success in terms of sales stability in the face of strong competition from local and foreign products and in terms of acceptable growth in profit. He also highlighted the company's success in being able to secure some outside markets, especially in the United Arab Emirates.

Noting that the company has started to upgrade some equipment to develop the production process, Mr. Abu Hassan said that the firm produced 1.9 million square metres of China tiles or about 95 per cent of the plant's capacity. As such, he indicated, the company was able to cover the needs of the local market and to export to neighbouring countries. The firm also produced 3,630 tonnes of sanitary fixtures or 90 per cent of the capacity of the plant that manufacturers these sanitary products.

In financial terms, total sales amounted to JD10.47 million last year. Of this amount, JD7.35 million were generated by the China tiles section and JD3.12 million by the section of the sanitary fixtures. Net profit posted during 1996 amounted to JD2.97 million of which the company will be distributing JD500,000 in cash dividends.

According to the annual report, total assets of the company amount to JD12.56 million of which JD5.31 million or 42 per cent are fixed assets. Shareholders' equity totalled JD9.86 million of which JD7.36 million are general reserves.

Mr. Abu Hassan said the company's plan for 1997 would be to set up a plant to produce large size of tiles for walls and floors and to expand in introducing modern models for bathroom sanitary fixtures (Al Ra'i).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDENSDAY 21/05/1997

	PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	269.000	213.000	ARAB BANK	11.8	1.56	4	100	25600	257.00	256.00	1.00-
N	2.100	1.680	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	10	11018	19734	1.79	1.80	.01+
	5.500	4.100	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	10.3	3.00	1	2000	10000	5.00	5.00	-
	3.600	2.760	BANK OF JORDAN	10.8	0.00	3	468	1404	3.00	3.00	-
	1.210	.880	MID.EAST INV.BK.	70.3	0.00	7	1150	1210	1.07	1.07	-
	2.480	2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	8.1	7.69	3	1500	3315	2.22	2.20	.02-
	5.100	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	14.3	4.06	25	6047	29176	4.90	4.78	.12-
	2.950	2.440	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	19.0	0:00	6	6470	16860	2.62	2.62	-
	1.050	.790	JOR.GULF BANK	4.8	8.75	11	10000	8000	.80	.80	-
	3.870	3.450	ARAB JOR.INV.BK.	17.3	0.00	1	400	1440	3.56	3.60	.04+
	4.050	3.480	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	14.8	3.31	7	1700	6179	3.63	3.63	-
+	2.220	1.260	UNION BK.SAV.INV.	P	0.00	2	262	328	1.26	1.25	.01-
	3.800	3.000	JOR.INV.FIN.BANK	20.4	0.00	9	20077	63641	3.17	3.17	-
	2.850	1.000	BEIT.AL-MAL (BEITNA)	.7	14.15	2	400	419	1.01	1.06	.05+
	1.440	1.000	PHILADEL.INV.BK.	g	0.00	6	854	941	1.12	1.12	-
	BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 193.26	%CHG: -0.46	97	62446	188247			
	4.550	4.100	JERUSALEM INSUR.	11.1	4.88	2	1365	5597	4.10	4.10	-
+	2.410	1.690	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	4.6	12.35	4	700	1141	1.69	1.62	.07-
	INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 113.59	%CHG: -0.38	6	2065	6738			
	1.820	1.450	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	8.0	6.06	23	10614	17513	1.66	1.65	.01-
	2.780	2.340	HIMEH MINERALS	13.3	5.91	1	200	528	2.78	2.64	.14-
	2.650	2.090	SHIPPING LINES	13.7	6.53	2	1500	3525	2.35	2.35	-
	1.480	.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	g	0.00	119	57350	66482	1.17	1.13	.04-
	1.030	.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	11.8	7.06	5	1500	1275	.85	.85	-
	2.200	1.170	MID. EAST HOTELS	20.3	0.00	2	100	133	1.32	1.33	.01+
	3.720	2.900	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	7.8	0.00	4	3038	9132	3.05	3.00	.05-
	2.230	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.51	8	2700	4543	1.67	1.69	.02+
+	1.110	.680	UNION LAND DEV.	g	0.00	5	625	416	.68	.67	.01-
	SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 110.37	%CHG: -0.44	169	77627	103546			
	1.250	.930	ATTANQEEB	g	0.00	1	600	588	.98	.98	-
	3.930	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	26.4	2.81	100	192691	752613	3.93	3.92	.01-
	3.500	2.710	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	9.7	2.86	26	53597	187572	3.50	3.50	-
T	6.350	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.9	3.12	18	8050	51390	6.35	6.41	.06+
	10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	9.0	9.56	3	204	1897	9.30	9.30	-
	7.300	6.000	JORDAN TANNING	7.4	5.00	2	190	1140	6.00	6.00	-
	1.510	1.150	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	52.0	0.00	1	250	293	1.23	1.17	.06-
	3.260	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	g	0.00	4	1300	2480	1.90	1.91	.01+
	7.500	6.420	JOR.WORSTED MILLS	10.6	3.03	5	1200	7940	6.70	6.60	.10-
	3.980	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	10.1	5.43	43	14981	55415	3.68	3.68	-
	7.250	5.650	JOR.CERAMIC IND.	6.9	2.96	1	150	1013	6.85	6.75	.10-
+	2.100	1.400	JOR.PIPES MANFCT.	17.2	5.76	9	3000	4170	1.40	1.39	.01-
+	3.600	2.800	JOR.PAPER CARDBD.	15.5	0.00	1	200	550	2.80	2.75	.05-
	5.910	4.250	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	11.6	5.26	23	16480	78030	4.74	4.75	.01+
	.960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.6	0.00	18	18450	9225	.51	.50	.01-
	1.310	1.020	ARAB PAPER CONV.TRD.	32.1	0.00	4	1200	1260	1.06	1.05	.01-
	1.520	1.010	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	g	0.00	1	3500	3780	1.10	1.08	.02-
	.870	.530	NATIONAL INDS.	7.8	11.32	12	7500	3984	.54	.53	.01-
	1.540	.700	INTERMED.PETRO.CHEM.	g	0.00	5	1200	866	.71	.72	.01+
	1.150	.600	JOR. ROCKWOOL INDS.	g	0.00	2	1000	620	.65	.62	.03-
	3.730	2.130	NATL.CABLE WIRE.MFAC	16.4	0.00	2	200	542	2.74	2.70	.04-
	1.170	.570	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	g	0.00	10	4250	2675	.63	.63	-
	1.670	1.120	ARAB PHARM.CHEM.	18.3	4.90	14	7700	11165	1.46	1.43	.03-
	2.660	1.410	UNIV. MODN.INDS.	P	.18	20	5800	8382	1.41	1.46	.05+
	1.730	1.130	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	15.5	8.70	12	4750	5463	1.16	1.15	.01-
	1.630	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	13.2	5.00	1	250	350	1.38	1.40	.02+
	1.230	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.8	0.00	12	5800	4988	.87	.86	.01-
	2.090	1.600	EL -ZAY READY WEAR	P	0.00	7	3000	4800	1.60	1.60	-
	1.330	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	27.3	0.00	14	9300	10800	1.17	1.16	.01-
	1.370	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	27.9	0.00	4	1600	1408	.88	.88	-
	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 122.72	%CHG: +0.25	375	368393	1215398			
	GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 155.86	%CHG: -0.17	647	510531	1513928			

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDENSDAY 21/05/1997

	HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	.670	.370	CENTRAL GEN.STORAGE	g	0.00	5	2500	975	.40	.39	.01-
	.790	.410	JOR.TRADE FAC.	12.0	0.00	2	1500	675	.45	.45	-
	.840	.660	UNION INV. 50%	g	0.00	23	91787	15602	.66	.67	.01+
	.810	.370	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	g	0.00	39	146850	69518	.47	.48	.01+
N	.950	.730	AL-SHARQ INV. 75%	E	0.00	4	1014	517	.78	.76	.02-
N	.950	.610	AL-DAWLIYAH 75%	14.2	0.00	1	1000	380	.64	.63	.01-
	.730	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	g	0.00	4	5400	2971	.55	.56	.01+
	.690	.430	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	51.8	0.00	6	2750	1238	.46	.45	.01-
	.720	.490	NATL. TEXTILE	g	0.00	1	1000	500	.50	.50	-
	.810	.400	NATL.MULT.ENG.NAMICO	E	0.00	47	169550	92628	.54	.56	.02+
	.970	.710	JORDAN STEEL	E	0.00	8	7050	5016	.71	.71	-
	.630	.430	ARAB ELECT.INDS.	P	0.00	1	2350	1199	.50	.51	.01+
	.730	.600	MIDEAST PHARM. 75%	E	0.00	3	900	351	.64	.64	-
	1.280	.860	UNION TOBACCO 75%	E	0.00	8	7756	4808	.87	.87	-
	.770	.550	RAZI PHARM. 85%	E	0.00	1	200	88	.59	.59	-
	.620	.390	INDS. ENG.	26.5	0.00	17	15438	6556	.42	.43	.01+
	.950	.760	INDS. CERAMIC	21.2	0.00	3	1500	1215	.80	.81	.01+
	.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	5	20600	12984	.65	.63	.02-
N	1.000	.810	NAT.ALUMINIUM. 75%	P	0.00	31	24932	15875	.88	.89	.01+
	.870	.530	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	13	10550	6963	.66	.66	-
	GRAND TOTAL					222	514627	240058			

Banks warned to adapt to electronic commerce or die

CHICAGO (AFP) — Banks must quickly adapt to the challenges of electronic commerce or die, a senior executive of Mastercard has said here.

Jerry McElhatton, president of global technology and operations at Mastercard International, told the annual conference of the Chicago Federal Reserve that banks must learn to meet the needs of the "interactive generation," the 30 million users of the Internet global computer network.

"The Internet may be the most significant event affecting commerce in this century and perhaps the next," he said. "How we manage rapid changes will determine whether or not survive."

"Investment you make in technology today both in money and talent will determine how far you can go in the next generation," he told the gathering of bankers.

Mr. McElhatton noted that credit cards were increasingly replacing cash and checks as the primary payment vehicle and predicted a big expansion in the use of smartcards worldwide, particularly in Asia, in the next few years.

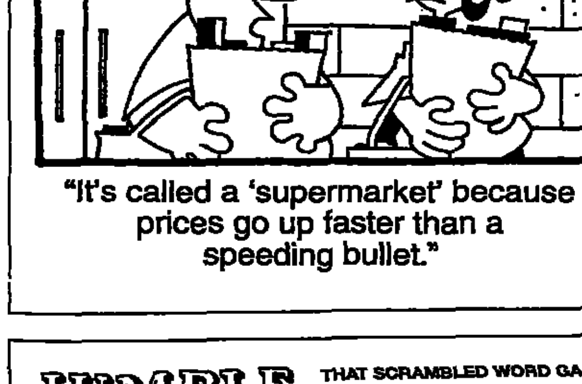
Smartcards, fitted with microchips, use radio frequency systems and software to produce a transaction in a millisecond without actually touching the equipment that reads it.

Mr. McElhatton said card usage provides banks with valuable data about consumers' behaviour and preferences that can be used for effective marketing.

"Open access to information is making middlemen an endangered species." he warned."

He pointed to the spectacular success of Amazon, the world's biggest virtual bookstore which is offering 2.5 million titles online, compared with only 175,000 by the largest physical bookstores such as Borders, Barnes Noble or Crown Books.

THE BETTER HALF® By Glasbergen



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JUMBLE® THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

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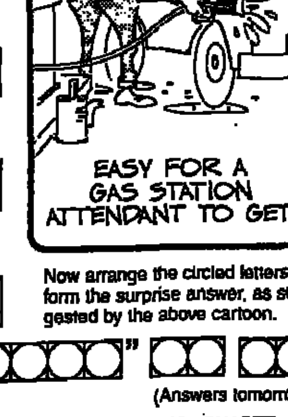

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: HIS "[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]" [ ][ ] [ ][ ]

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's | Jumbles: FORUM AROMA WALRUS QUARTZ
Answer: What the back door neighbors fought every year — A TURF WAR

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Bulls charge back to beat Heat in Eastern finals opener

CHICAGO (R) — The Chicago Bulls held the Heat to just 11 points in the fourth quarter as they charged to an 84-77 come-from-behind victory over Miami Tuesday in the opening game of the Eastern Conference finals.

Michael Jordan scored 37 points, Scottie Pippen had 24 points and Dennis Rodman pulled down 19 rebounds for the Bulls, who trailed by as many 16 points in the first half, by 11 at halftime and by five at the end of three quarters.

"They obviously showed their greatness at the end of the game with their defensive pressure," Heat coach Pat Riley said. "We succumbed to that."

The fourth quarter belonged to the Bulls, who took advantage of loose ball handling by Miami and the Heat's abysmal shooting from the foul line.

Miami converted just 4-of-13 from the charity stripe in the last quarter as Chicago outscored them 23-11 to take first blood in the best-of-seven series.

Game two is Thursday at Chicago.

Alonzo Mourning, who played sensational defence in the first half, led the heat with 21 points, while spark plug guard Tim Hardaway contributed just 13 points.

"We knew we didn't play especially well in the first half," said Jordan. "Tim Hardaway had it right in the first half when he said we played like old men."

The defending champion Bulls, who had a long wait to start this series as Miami battled back from a 3-1 deficit to eliminate the New York Knicks in seven games, took a while to get untracked, and scored just 17 points in the first quarter.

"There probably was a little rust," admitted Jordan. "Let's hope we got that out of our system."

Miami faded down the stretch, making just 3-of-12 shots from the floor, but coach Riley would not blame the defeat on fatigue stemming their draining series against the Knicks.

"Fatigue had nothing to do with it," said Riley, whose team led 49-38 at the half.

"We played great for 40, 45 minutes. But we made two crucial turnovers in a row and missed all those free throws. It had more to do with their pressure."

The Bulls trailed 72-67 before Rodman's tip-in with 6:03 left. Miami's Hardaway made a free throw, but Pippen and Ron Harper sank three-pointers to give Chicago the lead for good at 75-73 with 3:26 remaining. Harper stole the ball and fed Jordan for a dunk five seconds later.

Voshon Lenard missed a technical foul shot but Mourning split a pair of free throws, cutting the deficit to three. The Heat got the ball back, but Toni Kukoc made a steal and went all the way for a layup and a 79-74 lead with 1:36 left.

Mourning missed two more free throws and Jordan went in for a floater to seal it with 1:04 to go.

"I'll be kicking myself in my sleep tonight," said Mourning.

"The way we were able to grab this game back was defensive pressure," Jordan said. "We double-teamed their shooters at the perimeter and Dennis did a good job under the boards pressuring their big men."

Chicago shot just 36 per cent (32-of-89) from the field but held a 54-35 rebounding edge.

"I think this series had a tone set for it immediately," Bulls coach Phil Jackson said.

"We knew this game would be a defensive grind. I told the team at halftime that we have to out-defence them. It was certainly a game of two separate halves."

Michael Jordan

IAAF hits out at U.S. handling of drug cases

MONACO (R) — Athletics' governing body on Tuesday attacked the United States for its sluggish handling of the recent doping cases of Sandra Farmer-Patrick and Mary Slaney and of important routine drug-related matters at last year's Atlanta Olympics.

International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) General Secretary Istvan Gyulai said it was unacceptable that it had taken nearly a year for the U.S. Track and Field Association to ban Farmer-Patrick for four years after a positive test for the steroid testosterone.

Farmer-Patrick was allowed to compete at the Atlanta Games last august despite the positive test because the case had not been concluded.

The case of Slaney, who was also found to have high levels of testosterone in her body during the U.S. trials last June, has yet to be concluded.

"We are thinking of changing our rules on this. It is not acceptable that cases from last June have not been concluded by the following May," Gyulai said.

The main problem is that the U.S. rules on drug-testing procedures are not the same as those of the IAAF.

Under IAAF rules athletes are suspended immediately after the positive test pending an inquiry. But under U.S. rules an athlete is not suspended until the athlete has had time to have a hearing if required.

In the Farmer-Patrick case the hearing has only just taken place and the 400 metres hurdler has lost her case. But the Slaney hearing has yet to be held.

Usually the national federation is responsible for suspending the athlete.

The IAAF is also very unhappy that U.S. athletics authorities took a long time to supply the documents — including the result of drug tests — which were necessary for two world records at the Atlanta games to be ratified.

The IAAF have only just received all the documents for Donovan Bailey and Michael Johnson's world records in the 100 and 200 metres respectively. This documentation, which must include a negative drug test from the athlete before the record can be ratified, should be provided within one month.

The IAAF has also not received all the documents on Johnson's previous 200 world record at the U.S. trials last June so the performance cannot be included in the record books.

Australia upsets U.S. at World Team Cup

DUESSELDORF (R) — Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge, the world's top-ranked doubles team, gave Australia an unexpected win over the United States at the World Team Cup Tuesday.

The "Woodies", as they are known, beat Alex O'Brien and Jonathan Stark 4-6 6-4 6-2 to give Australia the Red Group tie 2-1 on a long day twice disrupted for over an hour by rain and which ended in darkness with a match still being played.

It was a surprise win for the Aussies who were faced with the usually lethal American combination of world number one Pete Sampras and number two Michael Chang in the reverse singles on Monday.

Sampras however, was forced to retire after straining a left thigh muscle while leading his opening match against Mark Philippoussis.

Chang, who teamed with Sampras to win the title for the U.S. four years ago, evened the tie with a win over Woodforde.

With darkness falling Alberto Costa sped through his match with Magnus Gustafsson in less than an hour, hammering the Swede 6-4 6-1 to give Spain the tie 2-0.

Earlier, Felix Mantilla had back from one set down to post a 1-6 7-6 6-4 win over Magnus Larsson.

Croatia and the Czech Republic were not able to complete their tie.

Level at 1-1, the doubles was suspended with Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic and Sasa Hirszon leading Daniel Vacek and Martin Damm 5-7 6-4 3-1.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Scottish players more careful

GLASGOW (AFP) — Scottish footballers should check first before taking the tablets after the exit of hearts striker Stephane Paille. "It is a warning to all players never to take any form of medication without consulting their club doctor or physiotherapist," players' union chief Tony Higgins said after Scottish football's first drug conviction in almost a decade of random testing. French striker Paille took a substance called dinintel before a premier division game against Kilmarnock last month, later claiming it was to try and help him with a weight problem. But the Scottish Football Association found the one-time French footballer of the year guilty of taking a banned substance and imposed a four-month ban from football from July to November. That suspension is now likely to be passed on to world football with hearts declaring that Paille, who was involved in a cannabis case earlier in his career, has been released. Paille was the first player snared by the SFA web since Scotland introduced random testing at the start of season 1988-89. "We are devastated for Stephane in this particular case," said Higgins. "We are convinced he only took the drug to control his weight and certainly not as a performance enhancing drug.

Nagano to have shortest downhill ever

MONACO (AFP) — Next year's Nagano Winter Games will feature the shortest downhill skiing course in Olympic history after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Ski Federation (FIS) dropped demands to extend the run in the face of environmental concerns. Makoto Kobayashi, director general of the Nagano Organising Committee (NAOC), confirmed on Wednesday that neither the IOC and the FIS would be pursuing the matter, which they now considered "closed." "The Japanese authorities made clear their opposition to raising the start of the course in view of environmental considerations, and the IOC and the FIS are no longer questioning us on this subject. It's finished," Kobayashi said. The Nagano run, 2,923 metres for the men and 2,654 metres for the women, will be around a third shorter than any other downhill in the history of the winter games. The start is at 1.680 metres altitude, and has a drop of 840 metres, with an average run expected to take just 90 seconds. "Our course is in no way inferior to the others," Kobayashi insisted. "There are no easy bends and there are plenty of challenging sections. We've had nothing but positive reaction from the competitors who have tried it out."

Laudrup to replace Cantona

COPENHAGEN (AFP) — Glasgow Rangers' Danish winger Brian Laudrup could replace Eric Cantona at English champions Manchester United, the BT daily reported Wednesday. United chairman Martin Edwards was reported to have offered the Scottish champions 9.5 million pounds ($15.5 million) for the 28-year-old whose contract at Rangers runs until July, 1998.

Sydney to host IOC, ASOIF meetings

SYDNEY (AFP) — Sydney will host meetings of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) executive board and the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) next year, it was announced Wednesday. Michael Knight, president of the Sydney Olympic Organising Committee (SOCOG), announced from Monte Carlo that the 2000 Olympics city will hold the meetings between April 27 and 30 next year. The ASOIF will bring to Sydney the international Olympic movement's policy makers who determine where world championships and other major events are held. Each Olympic sports federation will be represented at the Sydney meeting by its president and secretary general. Knight is in Monte Carlo where SOCOG are updating the IOC and ASOIF on Sydney's progress in staging the Olympics.

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SPOT THE ERROR

North-South vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠Q 7 6
♡J 8 4 2
♢A Q 7 2
♣A 3

WEST
♠J 3
♡Q 9 7
♢K J 8 5
♣K 10 7 6

EAST
♠A K 10 9 8 5 4
♡Void
♢6 3
♣J 5 4 2

SOUTH
♠2
♡A K 10 6 5 3
♢10 9 4
♣Q 9 8

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♢	3♠	4♡	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Jack of ♠

This hand was dealt in a pairs tournament, where overtricks and undertricks mattered. Follow the bidding and play and decide who, if anyone, made any error in either the bidding and play.

West led the jack of spades and, when that held, continued the suit. Declarer ruffed, cashed the ace and king of hearts, then led the ten of diamonds. West covered with the king, taken by the ace in dummy, and declarer ruffed a spade. West discarding a club. Reading the hand perfectly, declarer exited with a trump to the queen. Down to nothing but minor-suit cards, West was endplayed. Whichever suit the defender chose to lead would present declarer with the fulfilling trick. This was a particularly good result since East-West could make nine tricks at spades.

There is some argument that East, at this vulnerability, should jump to four spades rather than three, but that is not a major charge. East's defense, however, left something to be desired.

At trick one East should overtake partner's jack of spades with the king and shift to a club. No matter what declarer elects to do, the defenders are in control. Declarer must lose a trick in each suit for down one.

This type of defense crops up quite frequently. It is often right for a defender who is short of entries to overtake partner's trick to make a critical shift. Be on the lookout for such a situation.

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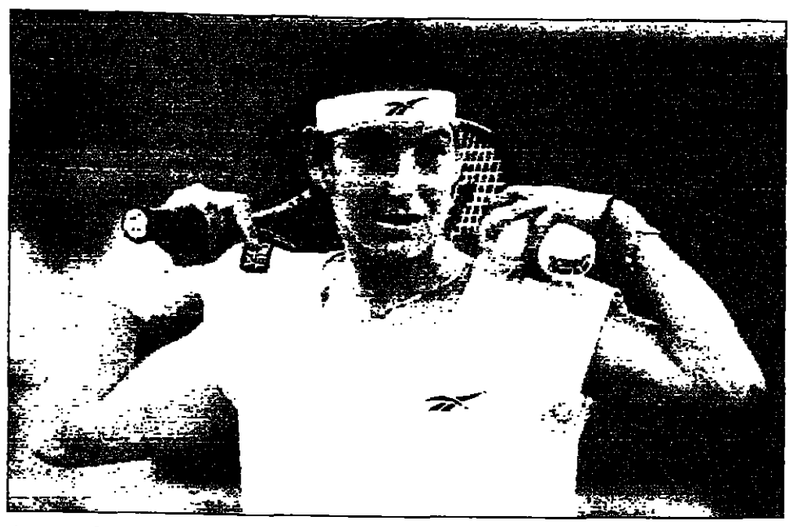

Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario

No time to prepare for 'Grand Slam' chasers at Roland Garros

PARIS (AFP) — When the world's top-ranked players Pete Sampras and Martina Hingis continue their Grand Slam bid and launch their French Open campaigns on the slow red clay courts at Roland Garros here next week — they will have had practically no matchplay preparation on the world's most demanding surface.

Sampras, who will be 25 and staging his eighth quest to win the only major title to elude him, has failed to win a single match on clay since he arrived in Europe last month.

A first-round defeat at Monte Carlo, where he was beaten in three sets by Sweden's Magnus Larsson, was followed by another immediate loss in Rome where the 25-year-old American went down to compatriot Jim Courier.

Meanwhile Hingis, the 16-year-old Swiss prodigy who is unbeaten on the women's tour since the start of the season, has not even faced an opponent on a clay court. She has been nursing the knee injury incurred when she was thrown from a horse on April 21.

But despite their lack of preparation, neither Sampras nor Hingis are brooding over their misfortunes.

Sampras, who had hoped to make use of a last chance to tune up his matchplay on the surface least-suited to his serve-and-volley style at this week's world team championships in Dusseldorf, saw those plans go awry as he was forced to withdraw with a thigh strain.

Yet he shrugged off his recent setbacks.

Sampras, who was pushing himself through a punishing practice session at Roland Garros just 24 hours after losing in Rome, added:

"I don't need to play two months on clay to get ready for the French Open."

The World No. 1, who has already collected nine Grand Slam tournament titles and who had to reorganise his early season programme after sustaining a wrist injury, will be particularly motivated in Paris. A triumph at Roland Garros will make him the first player to win all four major tournaments since his boyhood idol Rod Laver completed the feat in the sixties Laver, of course, twice collected all four crowns in the same year by notching up historic grand slams in 1962 and 1969.

If Sampras wins the French he will be halfway down the road to doing the same thing since he won the Australian Open back in January.

"To win in Paris would be a dream come true," said Sampras, adding: "Obviously it would mean more to me than anything else right now. I still think I'm capable of winning it. It's a case of adapting to the conditions, staying back more and coming in on he right ball."

Hingis, the youngest-ever player to top the women's rankings, has been busy rewriting the record books over the past twelve months but that has been child's play compared to trying to come to terms with inactivity in recent weeks.

Usually the Czech-born Swiss teenager, who was named after Martina Navratilova, packs her time off court horseriding, skating, and swimming.

But after being thrown from a friend's horse and undergoing arthroscopic surgery to her damaged knee, Hingis was ordered to take a complete rest.

In fact she only started serious training with coach and mother Melanie Molitor this week and she will need the green light from Austrian specialist Dr. Christian Schenk who was in charge of her knee operation before committing herself to a strenuous two weeks on the demanding surface.

Schenk, however, is expected to give her the nod, and despite her recent lay-off she will be a firm favourite to win what will be the centenary women's tournament.

Hingis, whose favourite surface is clay, won the French junior title in 1993 and 1994, and although she was beaten in the third-round of the senior event twelve months ago by big-hitting American Lindsay Davenport, everything she has touched since has turned to gold.

She became the youngest-ever Wimbledon champion when she joined forces with experienced Helena Sukova of the Czech Republic to win the women's doubles. And she then became the youngest Grand Slam singles champion this century by triumphing in Australia in January.

But if Sampras and Hingis have had problems with their Roland Garros build-up, so have their main rivals.

The usually consistent Michael Chang, winner in 1989 and a finalist two years ago, has been having an unusual lean spell — crashing to two successive first-round defeats.

In Atlanta the Chinese-American went down to Italian Fernando Meligeni and then in Rome he won only five games against Argentina's Hernan Gumy.

Austria's 29-year-old 'ironman' Thomas Muster, the 1995 champion and usually considered invincible on the slower surface, has been far from impressive this season. He has won only three matches in his last four tournaments and looked exhausted and bewildered as he crashed out to Australian Scott draper in the Italian open.

Yevgeny Kafelnikov

Last year's champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov is still struggling to get back to his best after a three-month early season lay-off caused by a self-inflicted hand injury caused in a gym accident. The fair-haired Russian slumped badly against his old friend Andrei Medvedev of the Ukraine in Hamburg and then surrendered so tamely to Spaniard Alberto Berasategui at the Italian Open that he was jeered off court.

If big-server Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia and Jim Courier are always dangerous, Holland's 1996 Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek, cannot be considered a serious title contender on a surface which muzzles his power. And he is also match-rusty after injury lay-offs.

Sampras' main threat is consequently expected to come either from Chile's rising star Marcelo Rios, winner at Monte Carlo and finalist at Rome, or from one of the army of Spanish clay-court specialists.

Rios, who at 5ft 9in (1m75) remains one of the shortest players on the tour, certainly has the strokes to succeed at the highest level. But although his deft touch and powerful double-fisted backhands demand respect, the 21-year-old left-hander sometimes tends to stop trying when things aren't going his way. On the otherhand the pony-trailed South American is quite unstoppable when he is in the driving seat and he must fancy his chances with the hierarchy in such disarray.

The strong Spanish contingent will include the 1993 and 1994 French champion Sergi Bruguera, former finalist Berasategui, this year's Australian Open finalist Carlos Moya, and last weekend's Italian Open champion Alex Corretja.

In the women's event, Hingis will be hoping to establish her supremacy over the 'old guard' led by defending champion Steffi Graf and Monica Seles. And on the face of it that shouldn't be too hard.

Graf's return to tournament tennis after a lengthy knee injury absence ended in humiliation in Rome last week when she was crushed 6-0, 6-1 in the quarter-finals by South Africa's Amanda Coetzer.

It was one of the worst defeats of the 27-year-old German player's career and she was clearly shaken by it.

Graf, who won her fifth French Open crown last year and who has triumphed in 21 Grand Slam events, admitted that she needed to pack

In as much match play as possible before arriving in Paris and immediately after her loss to Coetzer she hurriedly confirmed her entry for this week's WTA event in Strasbourg.

Seles, 23, is also on the comeback trail after being out of action for most of the early season with a broken finger and then with bronchitis. The former world number-one is still searching for the magic touch which brought her three consecutive Roland Garros triumphs in 1990, 1991, 1992 before her stabbing on court in Hamburg in 1993.

Although she remains a tough opponent, she appears to have lost the killer instinct.

Last month she did her confidence no favours by losing to Hingis in the finals at both Key Biscayne and Hilton head. She then failed to capitalise after taking an early lead and was beaten by big-hitting French player Mary Pierce in Rome.

Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, the 1989 and 1994 champion and a finalist against Graf for the past two years, will be looking to revive her flagging career. The 25-year-old Spaniard, who has been working with brother and former men's tour player Emilio as coach, is currently in freefall after a series of shock defeats.

Jana Novotna, Lindsay Davenport, Anke Huber, Conchita Martinez, Iva Majoli and Chanda Rubin can all expect to feature in the later stages of the competition — but none of them has been playing their best tennis in recent weeks.

Consequently newcomers like 15-year-old Russian Anna Kournikova and 16-year-old American Venus Williams could well steal the limelight.

Mary Pierce, who has gone from strength to strength since hiring Martina Navratilova's former coach Craig Kardon this season, has been in impressive form and will be hoping to improve on her 1994 finalists' berth. The Canadian-born French number-one, who notched up her first title in eighteen months by beating Spain's 1994 Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez in straight-sets in the final of the Italian Open earlier this month, reached the final in Berlin last weekend.

French Open factfile

PARIS (AFP) — Facts, figures and records of the French Open tennis championships which start at the Roland Garros stadium Monday:

• Winners of the most singles titles
Men
6-Bjorn Borg (Swe) 1974, 1975, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981
Women
7-Chris Evert (USA) 1974, 1975, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1986
• Winners of most singles and doubles titles
Men
9-Henri Cochet (Fra) 4 singles, 3 doubles, 2 mixed-doubles (between 1926-1932)
Women
13-Margaret Smith-Court (Aus) 5 singles, 4 doubles, 4 mixed (between 1962-1973)
• Winners of most consecutive singles titles
Men
4-Bjorn Borg (Swe) 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981
Women
3-Helen Wills-Moody (USA) 1928, 1929, 1930
Hilde Sperling (Ger) 1935, 1936, 1937
Monica Seles (Yug) 1990, 1991, 1992
• Winners of most doubles titles
Men
6-Roy Emerson (Aus) 1960, 1962 (with Neale Fraser), 1961 (with Rod Laver), 1963 (with Manuel Santana), 1964 (with Ken Fletcher), 1965 (with Fred Stolle)
Women
7-Martina Navratilova (USA) 1975 (with Chris Evert), 1982 (with Ann Smith), 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988 (with Pam Shriver), 1986 (with Andrea Temesvari)
• Winners of all three titles in the same year
Men (none)
Women
1925-Suzanne Lenglen (Fra)
1926-Suzanne Lenglen (Fra)
1938-Simone Mathieu (Fra)
1952-Doris Hart (USA)
1954-Maureen Connolly (USA)
1964-Margaret Smith-Court (Aus)
• Winners of both junior and senior singles titles
Men
Ken Rosewall (Aus), Roy Emerson (Aus), Andres Gimeno (Spa), Mats Wilander (Swe), Ivan Lendl (Cze)
Women
Francoise Durr (Fra), Mima Jausovec (Yug), Hana Mandiklova (Cze)
• Longest periods between title wins
Men
15 years — Ken Rosewall (Aus) 1953 and 1968
Women
12 years — Chris Evert (USA) 1974 and 1986
• Left-handed champions
Men
1946-Marcel Bernard (Fra)
1951 and 1952-Jaroslav Drobny (Cze)
1958-Mervyn Rose (Aus)
1962 and 1969-Rod Laver (Aus)
1966-Tony Roche (Aus)
1977-Guillermo Vilas (Arg)
1990-Andres Gomez (Ecu)
1995-Thomas Muster (Aut)
Women
1933 and 1934-Margaret Scriven (Grb)
1948-Nelly Adamson-Landry (Fra)
1961 and 1966-Ann Haydon-Jones (Gbr)
1982 and 1984-Martina Navratilova (USA)
1990, 1991 and 1992-Monica Seles (Yug)
• Youngest singles champions
Men
1989-Michael Chang (USA) 17 yrs 3 mths
Women
1990-Monica Seles (Yug) 16 yrs 6 mths
• Oldest singles champions
Men
1972-Andres Gimeno (Spa) 34 yrs 10 mths
Women
1958-Suzsi Kormoczy (Hun) 34 yrs 11 mths
• Longest singles finals
Men
4hrs 42mins (1982) — Mats Wilander (Swe) bt Guillermo Vilas (Arg) 1-6, 7-6, 6-0, 6-4
Women
3hrs 03mins (1996) — Steffi Graf (Ger) bt Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario (Spa) 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 10-8
• Shortest singles finals
Men
1hr 08mins (1970) — Jan Kodes (Cze) bt Zeljko Franulovic (Yug) 6-2, 6-4, 6-0
Women
34mins (1988) — Steffi Graf (Ger) bt Natalia Zvereva (Blr) 6-0, 6-0
•1997 prizemoney (in French francs)
Men's singles champion — 3,668,000
women's singles champion — 3,450,000
men's doubles champions — 1,508,000 (per team)
women's doubles champions — 1,182,400 (per team)
mixed doubles champions — 330,000 (per team)

Rookie Dunwoody helps Marlins snare victory

MIAMI (R) — Rookie Todd Dunwoody had three hits and drove in three runs Tuesday, including a game-winning single in the bottom of the ninth to lift the Florida Marlins to their eighth straight win, 6-5 over the New York Mets.

Dunwoody is batting .388 (7-for-18) with six RBI in seven games since winning play time after star right fielder Gary Sheffield suffered a sprained left thumb in last Tuesday's 11-5 win over the Atlanta Braves.

"I'm a young player and a rookie and I want to leave an impression," said Dunwoody, who turned 22 last month. "I will not sleep tonight, this is phenomenal. I'm walking on air."

In St Louis, Danny Jackson allowed one run and three hits over 6 1/3 innings in his season debut and Ron Gant hit a solo homer as the cardinals beat the Pittsburgh Pirates 3-1.

In San Francisco, Jeff Kent hit his third grand slam of the season and knocked in five runs to power the giants to a 6-3 victory over the slumping Colorado Rockies.

In Atlanta, Terrell Wade allowed two runs over six innings and helped his cause with a tie-breaking RBI single as the Atlanta Braves beat the Montreal Expos 4-2.

In San Diego, Wally Joyner hit a three-run homer and Archi Cianfrocco drove in three runs to lead the Padres to a 7-3 win over the Los Angeles Dodgers in the first meeting between the teams since the last weekend of the 1996 regular season.

In Chicago, Mark Leiter allowed one run over eight innings and Ricky Bottalico pitched out of a bases-loaded jam in the ninth as the Philadelphia Phillies edged the Cubs 3-2.

In Houston, Curtis Goodwin stroked four hits and Hal Morris had three hits and a pair of RBI as the Cincinnati Reds claimed a 7-4 victory over the Houston Astros. John Smiley (4-6) allowed three runs and eight hits over seven innings for the win.

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Iran mired in foreign policy turmoil ahead of elections

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's next president will inherit a country struggling to counter a U.S. economic embargo, an exodus of European ambassadors and deteriorating ties with some key neighbours.

While the election campaign has barely addressed Iran's international isolation, the leading contenders have vied with each other to show their independence from the West, still demonised 18 years after the 1979 revolution which toppled the pro-Western Shah.

Paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned the four men standing in Friday's presidential poll to keep their distance from the West, especially Iran's arch-enemy the United States.

"People will not vote for any candidate who shows the slightest sign of feebleness towards America and Western political and cultural tendencies," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati insisted this week that Iran's "diplomacy will not change" after the departure of President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who has served the maximum two four-year terms allowed under the constitution.

Ali Akbar Velayati, foreign minister for 15 years, has thrown his support behind the establishment candidate, Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, against the other leading candidate, former Culture Minister Mohammad Khatami.

On foreign policy, the pre-election debate has featured anti-American slogans and platitudes about Iran's role in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Mr. Khatami, who is backed by a coalition of Islamist centrists and radical left-wingers, often goes to great lengths to deny conciliatory tendencies towards the United States among his more moderate supporters.

Mr. Nouri too has had to dispel rumours that his supporters are disposed towards Britain, especially after the leak to the press of a meeting between one of his allies and a British diplomat in London.

Foreign diplomats believe normalising relations between Tehran and Washington will be the number one issue for the next president.

Iran has been under a total U.S. embargo for the past two years because of its alleged links with international terrorism, its efforts to build up its army and for opposing the Middle East peace process.

Ties with Europe, already tense over Iran's 1989 death sentence against British author Salman Rushdie, have deteriorated since a German court last month judged that Iranian leaders were implicated in the assassination of Iranian Kurds in Berlin in 1992.

While embroiled in the crisis with Europe, Iranian leaders have threatened to turn to Russia and industrial Asian countries as a viable trade and economic partner.

Elsewhere, relations between Tehran and Ankara are unstable because of fears among Turkey's powerful secular circles that the Islamic republic is seeking to export the Islamic revolution to its Western neighbour.

Mr. Velayati last month also rejected accusations by a Turkish general that Iran backed Kurdish separatists and Islamist rebel groups in Turkey.

Iran also has problems with its eastern neighbour, Pakistan, accusing it of supporting Afghanistan's Taleban Islamic militia which is hostile to Tehran.

Despite efforts to build friendly ties with the Gulf Arab monarchies, these countries remain wary of Tehran's intentions in the volatile oil-rich region.

In particular, Iran is locked in a territorial dispute with the United Arab Emirates over the Gulf islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb.

Iran is also yet to recover from the 1980-1988 war with Iraq and numerous obstacles, including the issue of prisoners of war, need to be overcome before the two neighbours can normalise ties.

(see story on page 1 for poll analyses)

Peace group numbers on settlements clash with U.S. leaked report

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Peace Now group, one of the harshest critics of the Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, said Wednesday that a U.S. government survey had overestimated the number of empty houses in settlements.

The U.S. survey, leaked to the media this week, found 25 per cent of the housing units in the West Bank and 56 per cent in Gaza were empty — undermining the government's argument that more building is needed to accommodate natural population growth.

Peace Now, whose agenda is also served by the U.S. study, agreed there were vacant homes in the communities, but could not confirm the U.S. claims.

Spokeswoman Hagit Yaari said a survey by the group two months ago found only 12 per cent of the housing units in the West Bank and 25 per cent of those in the Gaza Strip were empty.

"I would rather base our case on the American numbers, but I can't lie," she said. "We definitely have different numbers from the Americans. For example, the American report has 1000 units in (the settlement) Shilo empty, but there are only 900 units in total in Shilo, so that can't be true."

Still, Ms. Yaari maintained, both reports proved "building is a political action and there is no need for (more) houses."

The U.S. survey, completed in February, found families living in 31,061 out of 41,000 homes in the West Bank, and 1,100 of 2,300 homes in the Gaza Strip, according to the Haaretz daily.

Haaretz quoted settler spokesman Aharon Domb as saying only five per cent of the housing units in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were empty.

The issue comes at a time of worsening relations between Israel and the United States over the settlement issue.

The U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, said Sunday that unilateral Israeli acts, such as construction of Jewish settlements on disputed lands, have contributed to the breakdown in Middle East peace talks.

Palestinians maintain Israel builds and expands settlements in the West Bank and Gaza as well as Arab east Jerusalem as a way to strengthen its hold on land claimed by both sides.

COLUMN

'Born again' U.S. child pornographer gets 20 years

LITTLE ROCK (R) — An Arkansas man who called himself a born-again Christian was sentenced to 20 years for child pornography. John E. Herndon was arrested last year after police raided his Little Rock home and found dozens of snapshots of two girls, aged 14 and 15, in sexually explicit poses. "They were my muffins and my flowers," Herndon told the judge in a statement read at his sentencing. "They were earth angels. I renew my promises to the girls as a born-again Christian that I will always love them and protect them. I hope the girls will call me so we will begin anew." The judge responded by rejecting defence pleas for a reduced sentence and imposed the maximum, 20-year sentence against Hendon, who is a paraplegic from a 1983 motorcycle accident.

Budapest restaurant closed down over $6,000 dinner

BUDAPEST (R) — A Budapest restaurant which charged two Danish tourists and two women companions more than $6,000 for dinner and drinks was closed down for three months by local authorities. Consumer protection authorities said last week they had begun legal proceedings against the Dreher Halaszcsarda after Preben Olsen lodged a complaint at a tourist office, saying he had been charged more than one million Forints, newspapers said. However, a successful claim against the restaurant's owner would only result in a maximum fine of 30,000 forints ($176) under Hungarian law.

Snow White, dwarfs face chop in Belgium

BRUSSELS (R) — Thousands of counterfeit Snow Whites and even larger numbers of her seven dwarfs face the chop after Belgian customs seized 13 container-loads full of them at the port of Antwerp, Belga News Agency said. The plastic Walt Disney characters were on their way from China to France, Belga said citing a justice source. As with hundreds of fake Smurfs also recently seized on their way through Belgium, the counterfeit Disney characters will be destroyed.

'Beatles' tap found — report

LONDON (AFP) — A recording of Paul McCartney and John Lennon playing together in 1974, valued at around two million pounds ($3 million), has been found, it was reported Wednesday. The tape — recorded four years after the Beatles split and a legend among the group's fans — has been tracked to a 25-year-old salesman from the Beatles home town of Liverpool, the Daily Mail said. The tape's existence has been rumoured for years, and part of its value lies in the banter between tracks, which dispels the myth that McCartney and Lennon had an acrimonious relationship after the Beatles split, the Mail said.

Family gets $7 million in U.S. cell-phone crash case

FORT WORTH (R) — A Texas jury ordered an 18-year-old girl to pay about $7 million in damages to the family of a boy killed when she lost control of her vehicle while answering a cellular telephone. Kayla Segerstrom crashed her family van head-on into another car on Jan. 13, 1996, losing control when she reached to answer the telephone. A three-year-old boy was killed in the accident. His baby sister's neck was broken and their father, James Colvin, suffered serious brain damage.

Juppe says France to sell frigate to Saudi Arabia

PARIS (R) — Prime Minister Alain Juppe announced Tuesday that France had signed a multi-billion franc contract to sell a frigate to Saudi Arabia and armaments for it and two other ships already sold to the Gulf kingdom.

Speaking five days before the first round of a parliamentary election dominated by unemployment, Mr. Juppe said the contracts would guarantee 2,600 jobs for five years. He gave no precise figures but each of the two frigates previously sold was worth about 9.5 billion francs ($1.66 billion).

"This means billions (of francs) in orders and it's 2,600 jobs which are ensured for five years in regions which are very sensitive (to unemployment)," Mr. Juppe told TF1 Television.

A Defence Ministry statement said the vessel was an anti-aircraft frigate of the Swari-II category akin to French Lafayette-class frigates.

The ministry said the frigate, and the two others sold previously, would receive anti-aircraft equipment equivalent to that aboard the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle now under construction making the Saudi ships "among the most modern in the world."

Defence industry sources said the equipment was medium-range Arabel-Aster missiles designed to intercept incoming missiles in flight.

French media have described them as equivalent to, or better than the latest generation super Patriot-type anti-missile missiles made in the United States.

Anti-submarine warfare equipment would also be included, the ministry said. Industry sources said this would include anti-submarine torpedoes with Atas locating sonar equipment.

The sources said the first two frigates would be delivered in 2003 and the latest the following year.

The main beneficiaries of the sale will be the state-run DCN naval construction firm and the Thomson CSF and Aerospatiale firms, the ministry said.

DCN would get work for 950 people, including in main sites Toulon and Lorient. Thomson CSF would have work for 850 people and Aerospatiale would have work for 500, the ministry said.

It added that work would be provided at 13 separate sites around the country.

The annnoucement was expected to be greeted with relief in the defence industry which has seen orders falling sharply in recent years.

The Defence Ministry described the contract as "a new stage in the development of Franco-Saudi relations" and underlined it followed personal efforts by President Jacques Chirac who desperately wants the centre-right coalition which backs him to to win the country's May 25-June 1 general election.

In Saudi Arabia, state television reported that King Fahd approved the purchase.

CAMPAIGNING FOR ALEGERIA'S ELECTIONS: Young men hold posters of the leader of the Movement of Society for Peace, formerly MSI-Hamas, Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah, as he spoke to the crowd in Cherarba on Tuesday (AFP photo)

SPLA rebels turn LRA camp in Sudan into its headquarters

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) guerrillas have put to good use a former Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel camp they overran last month, allegedly with the help of Ugandan government troops.

The camp at Aru, 13 kilometres behind the frontlines in what was once Sudanese government territory is now a temporary headquarters for the SPLA.

SPLA commanders shuffle about, using the LRA's pit latrines, sleeping in their beautiful huts, and playing chess in the former office of LRA leader Joseph Kony.

The LRA has been operating out of government-held territory in southern Sudan since 1994, although they only moved to Aru, 75 kilometres south of Juba, last year.

Uganda accuses Sudan of supporting the LRA rebels, who have been fighting for ten years to overthrow the government of President Yoweri Museveni and put in its place an administration based on the Biblical ten commandments.

Sudan, in turn, accuses Uganda of aiding the SPLA rebels, who have been fighting Khartoum since 1983 to end domination of the mainly Christian and Animist southern Sudan by the Arab Muslim north.

The April attack on Aru advanced SPLA positions along the Moli-Juba road by 32 kilometres, and opened up a fourth approach on the southern Sudanese regional capital, Juba, which is the current goal of the SPLA offensive.

Aru is a one-kilometre-square area, straddling the red mud road leading to Juba.

An SPLA commander now lives in what was Mr. Kony's compound, which has huts for his wives, an office, huts for guards and a kitchen. Mr. Kony's house, burnt down in the attack, was a small mud rectangle. A metal bed-frame poked from the ashes.

Small flowers had been planted around the house, while to the left, there was a delicately constructed bird house. Nearby, a few huts had been painted with slogans, some were obscure, but read: "The cup of Sullivation." Another warned: "Keep your area clean."

Five minutes' walk from Mr. Kony's compound is a small meeting ground, filled with concentric circles of small pebbles, mixed with flowers.

David, a 17-year-old LRA deserter, who was abducted by the LRA as he made his way to school in northern Uganda, said Mr. Kony called his meetings here every Sunday, flanked by whited-robed priests.

"These are not real priests. They stand there clapping and singing, but they do not talk about God — only about killing people," David said, adding that in the centre of the circle, captured escapees were slaughtered, often stabbed to death with a long metal spear.

The LRA is largely made up of teenagers abducted from their homes in northern uganda.

The U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) has estimated that between 5,000 and 8,000 have been abducted in the past two years, but there is a high desertion rate.

Aru was not just a home for the rebels, it was their training ground. Near the roads, a large weapons store was packed full with boxes marked clearly from Iran, while beyond the foxholes was a large field where the new recruits were given weapons training.

Most of the rebels resorted to raiding nearby villages, earning themselves the local name of "tong tong", or "those who cut people to pieces."

Rose, 23, was recently attacked by the LRA, and she was now seeking sanctuary with the SPLA in Aru. "The tong tong used to come and cut us and kill us," she said.

French general visits Israel for arms deals

TEL AVIV (AFP) — France's military chief-of-staff, General Jean-Philippe Douin, was scheduled to begin a two-day visit to Israel Wednesday amid efforts to revive weapons sales between the two countries.

Gen. Douin, invited by his Israeli counterpart General Amnon Shahak, is due to hold talks with President Ezer Weizman and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai as well as visit military bases in northern and central Israel, Gen. Shahak's office said.

Gen. Shahak visited France in September and French Defence Minister Charles Millon came to Israel three months ago as part of efforts to revive bilateral military cooperation.

France is the world's third largest arms exporter but has had difficulty denting the strong procurement links between Israel and the United States.

Last year Israel participated for the first time in the Eurosatory Weapons Exhibit in France and next month 19 Israeli civilian and military companies will be represented at the 47th Paris Air Show.

Cypriot to go on trial for infecting lover with AIDS

NICOSIA (AFP) — A Greek-Cypriot fisherman is to go on trial on Thursday accused of knowingly infecting his former British lover with the killer AIDS virus.

Pavlos Georgiou, 40, has been charged under a section of the Cyprus criminal code originally drawn up to fight the spread of cholera and typhoid on the island 50 years ago.

His alleged victim, 45-year-old Janette Pink of Basildon in Essex, has returned to Cyprus to give evidence against her former lover.

The British divorcee moved to Cyprus in 1993 and began an affair with Georgiou, a married father of four from the southeastern tourist resort of Ayia Napa.

She claims that despite his knowing his own wife Martha was dying from AIDS, Georgiou lied to her about the illness and the fact that he also had the HIV virus that can lead to AIDS.

Pink, who now lives back in England, became pregnant but had an abortion in February 1996 after learning she was dying from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

She took a test when she heard Georgiou's wife died of the disease in 1994 and that his four-year-old child was also infected.

The mother-of-two, whose life expectancy is a maximum three years, is currently in remission helped by a daily cocktail of new-generation anti-AIDS drugs and slow-release morphine tablets.

Egypt's highest civil court insists that female circumcision is legal

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's highest civil court has recommended that female circumcision should be legal in the country, although it also said the practice was not deemed obligatory by Islam, judicial sources said Tuesday.

The Council of State has passed on a recommendation to a lower court, the Cairo Administrative Court, which is to make a ruling on a decision by Health Minister Ismail Sallam to ban female circumcision in hospitals.

The council referred to several Hadith, words spoken by the Prophet Mohammad which along with the Koran are considered the basis of Islamic law, to decide that the practice was "legal, without being obligatory."

It said that the decision should be left to each individual family.

The Cairo court, which is to rule on the issue of the hospital ban on June 24, almost always follows the council's recommendations and the ban is likely to be overturned, the sources said.

The case against the health minister's ban, which came into force in June last year, was brought by a group of lawyers, Islamists and doctors.

The Islamists claimed the minister had violated Islamic laws and that the practice of circumcision was important to quell women's sexual desires.

The debate over female circumcision in Egypt erupted after a 14-year-old girl died while a doctor was carrying out the operation in August last year. The doctor was later charged with negligence.

Eight Egyptian women out of 10 support the practice of female circumcision because they consider it a "good tradition," according to a study by Egypt's National Population Council earlier this year.

Egypt's highest Sunni Muslim authority, Sheikh Mohammad Sayyed Tantawi of Al Azhar has said Islam does not advocate female circumcision and that doctors should decide whether it is necessary to perform the operation.

The Egyptian organisation of human rights has estimated that nearly 3,600 girls, both Muslims and Coptic Christians, undergo excisions each day in Egypt.